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Iowa won't privatize prison health services

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Des Moines Register
USA TODAY NETWORK

Iowa will not move forward with a plan to privatize health care services in the state's prisons after previously considering it over the summer, the Iowa Department of Corrections confirmed.

The Department of Corrections issued a request for proposals in July "to explore future options for health care delivery" as well as to update its electronic health care record system.

But the department said in a statement Nov. 20 that the state will not award a contract to any of the compa-

nies that applied.

"After reviewing proposals and evaluating options for privatizing and improving health services, the Iowa Department of Corrections has decided not to move forward with a vendor," the department said in its statement.

"This exploratory process reinforced that the department is better positioned to evaluate opportunities to strengthen the current system and, by retaining management of these services, will ensure any changes to the health care delivery model meet operational needs, support staff and incarcerated individual safety and align with our long-term direction."

The department declined to answer questions about the number of bids the state received, or the cost of the proposed bids, directing the Des Moines Register to file an open records request.

State officials had faced criticism from state union workers and Democrats over the proposal.

Todd Copley, president of AFSCME Council 61, which represents health care workers in Iowa's prisons, previously called the idea "a slap in the face to the public employees who've kept Iowa's correctional health system running through crisis after crisis."

Copley could not be reached for comment, but he told The Gazette that the

choice not to award a contract to any of the vendors was "a very good decision."

The department previously cited staff shortages, rising pharmaceutical and transport costs and a need to expand mental health and substance abuse treatment as reasons for seeking bids from private companies to run its health care system.

The department has also said its electronic health care record system, which has been in use for more than 20 years, is "long overdue" for an upgrade.

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Military honors salute philanthropist 'Bill' Knapp

Virginia Barreda

Des Moines Register
USA TODAY NETWORK

ADEL – About 200 family, friends and admirers of William C. "Bill" Knapp bid the World War II veteran and civic leader farewell in a ceremony with full military honors at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery, where he will be buried.

The ceremony on Friday, Nov. 21 was at a pavilion on the grounds of the cemetery he donated a bulk of the land to create. Attendees gathered solemnly as U.S. Navy officers stood on either side of Knapp's casket, draped with a United States flag. Riflemen fired a ceremonial three-volley salute before a trumpeter played taps.

Knapp's wife, Susan, said in an interview her husband did so much for the state, and she and their daughters worked hard to make sure he was honored.

"He made sure that Iowa had a veterans cemetery," Susan Knapp said. "We were, maybe, one of four or five states that did not have a veterans cemetery. He corrected that. He made that happen."

Knapp donated a 76-acre tract he owned in Dallas County just off Interstate 80. Another philanthropic family, the Kenyons, donated an adjacent, 24-acre tract, and in 2008 the 100-acre cemetery was dedicated with space for up to 50,000 burials.

Knapp died of natural causes Saturday, Nov. 15 at his Van Meter home, with his wife by his side, a family spokesperson said. He was 99 years old. His interment at the cemetery fol-

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"Taps" is performed during a military honors funeral for Bill Knapp at Iowa Veterans Cemetery on Nov. 21, in Van Meter. LILY SMITH/THE REGISTER



The members of the 1985 ISU women's cross country team and their coach Ron Renko. PROVIDED BY IOWA STATE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT

ISU cross country's joy shattered by deadly plane crash 40 years ago

Ronna Faaborg

Ames Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK

Nov. 25, 1985, was a jubilant day for the Iowa State women's cross country team, one that quickly turned heart-breaking and tragic.

The Monday before Thanksgiving was cold and icy as the team flew home from the NCAA National Championships in Wisconsin. Head coach Ron Renko and his team hoped to place as high as sixth, but defied expectations and finished second, crowning a season of grit, camaraderie and purpose.

Joy turned to grief, however, when the last of three ISU planes that took off from Milwaukee crashed in a residential neighborhood in Des Moines, killing all seven people on board.

It was a moment that shattered lives and left a legacy of resilience and remembrance.

The seven who perished were Coach Renko, assistant coach Pat Moynihan, Iowa State cross country members Sue Baxter, Sheryl Maahs and Julie Rose, student trainer Stephanie Streit and pilot Burton Watkins.

Coach Renko's team had a season of purpose and promise

The Iowa State's women's cross



View of wreckage of an Iowa State plane that crashed in a neighborhood two miles west of downtown Des Moines on Nov. 25, 1985. The plane was carrying members of the women's cross country team. GARY FANDEL/REGISTER ARCHIVE PHOTO

country program wasn't just good — they were legendary. With national titles in the late '70s and early '80s, they had built a reputation for excellence. In 1985, under the passionate leadership of Coach Ron Renko, they were chasing something more: redemption.

After a disappointing performance

at the Big 8 meet, where they lost to Nebraska, the team regrouped with fierce determination.

The course in Milwaukee was cold, snow-covered, hilly and unforgiving, but the team thrived.

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