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### **Governor Rounds establishes prisoner re-entry panel**

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Mike Rounds signed an executive order Wednesday to create a special council to deal with the issue of state prison system recidivism, or the return to prison or jail of people who have been freed and commit more crimes.

“We want to focus on keeping people out of trouble once they have been released from state custody,” Gov. Rounds said. “The Governor’s Reentry Council will give us an opportunity to work at reducing the recidivism rate, based upon all of the resources we have within various departments and agencies of state government.”

The governor said more than 2,000 inmates are released from state prisons, parole and suspended-sentence supervision each year. More than 40 percent of them are later convicted of subsequent crimes.

The new council will bring together various state officials in an effort to reduce recidivism by concentrating on the needs of people released from state custody. Those individuals face such issues as drug and alcohol abuse, and medical and mental health problems, as well as lack of education, employment and housing.

“The Reentry Council will provide transition planning and resources to help former prisoners move back into normal, everyday lives and become law-abiding citizens,” Gov. Rounds said. “It’s a win-win, if we’re successful, in that we not only have fewer people in prison but we also have more people contributing to society.”

Council members will include the state secretaries of Corrections, Education, Labor, Health, Human Services, Military and Veterans Affairs, and Social Services; director of Tribal Government Relations; executive director of the South Dakota Housing Development Authority; heads of other departments or agencies; and representatives of local governments, organizations and associations, as the governor designates.

No additional state funds will be necessary because the Department of Corrections will administer the effort within its existing budget, and other departments and agencies will provide staff assistance. Federal funds also will be sought to support the work of the council.