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The Jamestown Sun

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JAMESTOWN, NORTH DAKOTA

Voters to decide on ND Constitution edits

Lawmakers OK ballot measure that would remove outdated terms

By Jeremy Turley
 The Jamestown Sun

BISMARCK — Most North Dakotans wouldn't use terms like "feeble-minded," "deaf and dumb" or "insane" to describe people with disabilities or mental illness, but the outdated language is still featured in the state Constitution. Voters will have the opportunity to change that next year. The state House of Representatives and Senate unanimously passed Senate Concur-

rent Resolution 4001, which would change references in the constitution from:

- ▶ A "school for the deaf and dumb" to a "school for the deaf and hard of hearing."
- ▶ A "state hospital for the insane" to a "state hospital for the care of individuals with mental illness."
- ▶ An "institution for the feeble-minded" to a "facility for individuals with developmental disabilities."

Since constitutional amendments require a

public vote, the measure will appear on the statewide ballot in 2024. Some of the phrases lawmakers hope to eliminate date back more than a century. The original constitution approved at statehood in 1889 created a "deaf and dumb asylum" in Devils Lake, though voters approved a measure 15 years later that changed the institution's name to the "school for the deaf and dumb of North Dakota." A website for the facility calls it the School for

the Deaf. Voters approved a measure in 1904 to establish an "institution for the feeble-minded" in Grafton. The facility in the northeastern corner of the state is now called the Life Skills and Transition Center on its website, but the old name remains in the constitution. Rep. Kathy Frelich, a Devils Lake Republican who works at the School for the Deaf, said the measure provides "a great opportunity here to replace the outdated

terminology with words that are more accurate and respectful." Sen. Kristin Roers, R-Fargo, referred to the existing constitutional language as "terms that make me cringe to even say them." In its original form, the resolution would have changed "deaf and dumb" to "deaf and hearing impaired." The Senate amended the language to "deaf and hard of hearing" after Tammy Derrick, a deaf Bismarck resident, told Forum News Service in

January that the deaf community no longer uses the term "hearing impaired" because it implies people are deficient due to their inability to hear. Lawmakers also are considering proposed constitutional measures to legalize sports betting, to water down legislative term limits, to allow for longer legislative sessions and to set a higher bar for citizen-initiated constitutional measures. Contact Jeremy Turley at jturley@forumcomm.com.

Officials: Fargo nurse's license suspended due to fake diploma

Cummings only North Dakotan tied to national investigation

By April Baumgarten
 The Forum

FARGO — A Fargo licensed practical nurse was suspended from her duties in September after North Dakota officials learned she obtained false credentials in a scheme that produced thousands of fake nursing diplomas and transcripts. The North Dakota Board of Nursing recently confirmed to The Forum that it suspended on Sept. 6 a nursing license for Dorothy Cummings, an LPN who worked at PAM Health Rehabilitation Hospital in Fargo. Attempts to reach Cummings were unsuccessful.

Cummings "fraudulently obtained an illegitimate one-year practical nursing certificate and transcript" that she used to get her licensure as a licensed practical nurse in North Dakota on Nov. 11, 2020," according to an emergency order that suspended her license. She also didn't complete the needed program hours and clinical training needed to earn her practical nursing certificate and transcript, the order said.

The suspension in North Dakota will last five years, the order said. During that suspension, she is not allowed to work in any nursing role in North Dakota.

Minnesota also suspended Cummings' license, according to Nursys, an online database that shows the status of nursing licenses in the U.S. Documents were not attached to that database, but Nursys said Cummings was suspended for "fraud, deceit or material omission in obtaining license or credentials."

North Dakota Nursing Board Executive

Director Stacey Pfenning confirmed Cummings obtained the false credentials through a scheme that sold more than 7,600 fake nursing degree diplomas and transcripts.

The investigation, dubbed Operation Nightingale, was launched by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and its law enforcement partners, according to a news release issued in January.

"Upon learning that an individual located in North Dakota was named in the FBI's investigation, our compliance division took immediate action to prevent the nurse from engaging in the practice of nursing by issuing an order of emergency suspension," Pfenning said in a statement. "We continue to monitor the ongoing investigation and will not hesitate to take additional measures to protect public safety should additional individuals be brought to our attention by law enforcement."

Cummings was the only nursing license holder in North Dakota connected to the investigation.

The Forum also reached out to the Minnesota Board of Nursing to ask if it had suspended any nursing licenses in connection to Operation Nightingale. The Minnesota agency did not respond by press time.

Cummings has not been criminally charged in the scheme, but 25 defendants are being prosecuted in the Southern District of Florida's federal court. They face up to 20 years in prison.

The investigation revealed the fake diplomas were issued by Siena College, the Palm Beach School of Nursing and Sacred Heart International Institute, the release said. The three south Florida schools are now closed, according to the release.

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Contributed photos / Canticle Productions

Starting left to right with the woman in red: Tiffany Cornwell as Sara Jacobson, Charles O'Haver as Albert Haven, Joseph Gray as Sheriff CA Jacobson, and Chris Bylsma as State's Attorney Sam Taylor on the set of "End of the Rope" in 2021.

'END OF THE ROPE' TO PREMIERE AT FARGO THEATRE

FILM IS BASED ON NORTH DAKOTA'S LAST LYNCHING AT BRIDGE

By Roxane B. Salonen
 The Forum

Minneapolis Children growing up in the Watford City area who resisted their chores were sometimes met with a haunting motivation.

"For that area of North Dakota, a lot of people were told this story as a cautionary tale," says Charles Griak, film director. "If you don't do your chores, Charles Bannon is going to get you."

The stern warning would be a dire prompt to the youngsters, who'd heard of the serial murderer who once worked as a hired hand for a family of five from the area, the Haven family, whom he killed on their farm in

IF YOU GO

What: "End of the Rope" film premiere and red-carpet event; Q&A with filmmakers and actors
When: 7 p.m. Friday, March 31
Where: Fargo Theatre, 314 Broadway, Fargo
Contact: Tickets, \$20, at <https://www.endoftheropefilm.com/> (tickets) or email tickets@canticle-productions.com.

1931. Griak directed the film, "End of the Rope," by Canticle Productions, which will premiere in Fargo in a week, and is based on that tragic event and the mob lynching of Bannon that followed at Cherry Creek Bridge in western North Dakota. The movie was patterned after Dennis E. Johnson's



Director Charlie Griak, left, and producer Daniel Bielinski, right, discuss a shot during filming of "End of the Rope."

2009 book, "End of the Rope: The True Story of North Dakota's Last Lynching." Griak recalls the day producer Dan Bielinski approached him about directing the film. "I still have the grainy photocopies he sent me

of the articles about this story," along with Johnson's book. "When I read the story, it felt like it was made to be a movie. There are so many exciting twists and turns."

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