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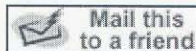
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Minorities more likely to be prosecuted in Nebraska, report says

BY JOSEPH MORTON
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Members of racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately charged, convicted and imprisoned in Nebraska compared with whites, according to a report on minority issues in the state's justice system.

The findings raise serious concerns about a system that should be blind to race and ethnicity, according to the report. Based on a broad study by the Nebraska Minority and Justice Task Force, the report also includes recommendations on how to address the problems.

The Nebraska State Bar Association's House of Delegates adopted the report unanimously Friday.

As an example of racial disparities in the system, the report cited the sentences given from 1999 to 2001 to defendants charged with possession of a controlled substance in Douglas County District Court.

Of the 338 white defendants, 61 percent were imprisoned while the rest received probation or just a fine. Of the 273 black defendants, 76 percent received jail time while the rest received probation or a fine.

The report noted that a more detailed analysis of those numbers is difficult because of the diverse and ambiguous factors that affect the outcomes of cases.

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