Wrongful arrests mount as fingerprint results are ignored.

Months behind bars
Sampling of St. Louis cases reveals 100 people were arrested and wrongfully held for a total of more than 2,000 days.

Preventable errors
Most cases could have been avoided or fixed immediately had authorities paid attention to fingerprints.

‘I don’t worry about this’
Officials in St. Louis initially expressed concern and pledged reforms, but now play down significance of the problem.

Events:
A city advisory committee on water fluoridation, represented by 314-621-5154 and jmann@post-dispatch.com, is considering recommendation to stop adding fluoride to water.

“Whether it’s good for your teeth or not, for my body or not, it should be my choice,” Pulley said. “We are definitely in favor, because it works, and it works well. We’d be fighting a losing battle.”

The Post-Dispatch has identified 200 people arrested in error over the past seven months. Collectively, they spent more than 2,000 days in jail — an average of about three weeks each. One man alone was incarcerated 217 days. About a quarter were held repeatedly — one or more times over the past few years.

Almost all the mistakes could have been prevented — or at least fixed immediately — had authorities paid attention to what fingerprints tried to tell them from the start.

Officials’ reaction to McNeal: It was her own fault, because if her name had not been in a criminal justice database, the mistake could not have been made.

About a quarter were held repeatedly — one of them, five times — and 15 were locked up more than once in error over the past seven months. One man alone was incarcerated a total of 217 days.

Rights groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union and the Greater St. Louis branch of the NAACP, have identified 100 people arrested wrongfully over the past seven years.

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