

The *Doing Time Times*

Federal Defender Services
of Wisconsin, Inc.



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Staying true to the mission of the *Doing Times Times* of speaking facts and truth to rumors, we update you on two important and closely watched topics. First, not a week goes by without a client or family member of someone who is incarcerated inquiring about the status of the Good Time legislation. Contrary to the rumors, no legislation has been passed to amend good time to 65 percent or revert back to the old parole system. What is true is that a proposed bill to change Good Time is pending and has been pending for a long time. However, there are no signs that passage is imminent. See page 7.

Second, we also update you on what could be a historic change in federal sentencing practice, if passed: the proposed bill to equalize sentencing for crack-cocaine and powder-cocaine. The Fairness in Cocaine Sentencing Act proposes equalizing mandatory minimums for crack-cocaine and powder cocaine. See page 4. Again, contrary to the rumor-mill, although this bill has cleared the first hurdle toward becoming actual law, it has not yet passed into law. However, the million-dollar question (judging from your letters and phone calls) is how would this legislation, if passed, help the readership of this newsletter, those who are already doing time? The short answer is we don't know yet and won't know until a final legislation passes. What we can tell you so far is that the current proposal is silent on the question of retroactivity and that generally if a law is to apply backward or retroactively, Congress must explicitly say so.

Next, we also bring to your attention the work of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission toward creating standards for addressing and preventing prison rapes. See page 9. The Commission estimated that 60,500 state and federal prisoners were sexually assaulted in 2007 alone. Given the number of people affected and the long-term impact of sexual assaults, the work of the Commission is a welcome first step toward more humane treatment of prisoners.

Last, on the BOP front, we report on changes in drug treatment program policies (page 2) and on a pilot program for early release of elderly inmates (page 1).

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BY THE NUMBERS

A February 18, 2009 report¹ from the Pew Hispanic Center reported the following:

- Latino inmates now represent the largest ethnic population in the federal prison system, accounting for 40 percent of those convicted of federal crimes;
- Nearly half or 48 percent of Latino offenders were convicted of immigration crimes. Thirty-seven percent were convicted for drug offenses and 15 percent for other offenses;
- Between 1991 and 2007, the number of Latino offenders sentenced in federal courts quadrupled; and
- Much of the increase in the number of Latinos sentenced in federal courts has come from a rise in the number of offenders sentenced for immigration offenses between 1991 and 2007.

**ELDERLY OFFENDER HOME
DETENTION PILOT PROGRAM**

On February 25, 2009, the BOP issued an operations memorandum² on a pilot program for the release of certain elderly qualifying prisoners. The

¹ "A Rising Share: Hispanics and Federal Crime." Available at www.pewhispanic.org.

² Available at www.bop.gov. See also, *Frequently Asked Questions About BOP's Elderly Offender Home Detention Pilot Program*, Families Against Mandatory Minimums (2009) <http://www.famm.org>.

program, named the Elderly Offender Home Detention Pilot Program, was authorized by the Second Chance Act which went into effect on April 9, 2008.³ It is a system-wide program available at all BOP institutions.

The BOP estimates that the program will allow approximately 80 to 100 elderly prisoners to leave prison early and serve the remainder of their sentences on home detention. The eligibility requirements are :

- The prisoner must be 65 years old or will reach 65 by September 30, 2010;
- The prisoner must have no prior felonies or misdemeanors for a crime of violence;
- The prisoner must not currently be serving a sentence for a crime of violence;
- The prisoner must not be serving a life sentence;
- The prisoner must not have been convicted of an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries or espionage and censorship;
- The prisoner has not escaped or attempted to escape from a BOP facility, including a halfway house, home detention, and contract facilities; and
- The prisoner must have served the greater of 10 years or 75 percent of the term of imprisonment.

³ See, A Second Act Update: Now That The Bill Has Become Law, What Benefits Can One Expect? Doing Time Times Issue 11.

Prisoners are evaluated for this program by their unit team, on the unit team's initiative or at the request of the prisoner. After considering the eligibility requirements the unit team is to evaluate the prisoner's history in considering whether home detention is appropriate for the prisoner. Among the factors to be considered are detainers, institutional adjustment and custody classification scoring. However, upon receipt of the recommendation from the unit team and the warden, the BOP's Central Office makes the final decision as to whether the prisoner can be released to home-detention. In deciding, the Central Office must consider whether home-detention placement will save money for the federal government. In evaluating cost savings to the government, the Central Office considers the cost of designating to home detention an inmate who may suffer from a chronic or serious medical condition that requires significant or ongoing medical care or a condition that would require placement in a nursing home or other residential long-term care facility rather a residence. If placing a prisoner in home detention will not save the government money, the prisoner will not be placed at home.

CHANGES TO DRUG PROGRAMS

Effective March 16, 2009, the BOP made significant changes to its policy for its drug treatment programs. The changes, which can be found in Program Statement (P.S.) 5331-02 and P.S. 5330.11,⁴ include:

⁴ Available at www.bop.gov.

Residential Drug Abuse Program (RDAP)

Early Release

- Previously, the maximum sentence reduction for completion of RDAP was up to 12 months. Under the new policy, inmates serving 37 months or more will now be eligible for up to a 12-month early release; inmates serving 31-36 months will be eligible for only up to a 9 month sentence reduction; and inmates serving less than 31 months will be eligible for no more than a 6-month sentence reduction.

Eligibility

- Review of prior and current offenses for eligibility in RDAP and early release will no longer be conducted in the regional or in the institutional legal offices but by the legal staff at the Designation and Sentence Computation Center.

- Inmates with a prior conviction of arson or kidnaping are no longer eligible for early release.

- The new policy states explicitly what documents BOP will consider in reviewing an inmate for RDAP. Examples of accepted documentation include documents from parole/probation officer/ social worker which document problems with substance within the last 12 months prior to arrest or commission of offense; documents from treatment provider who diagnosed the inmate with substance abuse disorder within the 12 month period prior to the inmate's arrest or offense; and multiple

convictions for driving under the influence within five years prior to arrest.

- The new policy also outlines an inmate's recourse in the event that no verifying information in the pre-sentence report or central file. The inmate may have a substance abuse treatment provider who diagnosed the inmate with substance abuse send documentation directly to BOP. The document must have been written at the time services were provided and must demonstrate a substance use diagnosis and treatment. An inmate can also have BOP verify his substance abuse problem by consenting to medical staff to verify physical evidence of addictions such as track marks or detoxification after entering the prison.

- Importantly, the new policy makes clear that an inmate can be sent to any available institution for RDAP, regardless of distance from home.

Drug Abuse Education Course (DRUG ED)

- Drug Ed is open to all inmates who may have a substance abuse problem and volunteer to participate. But the course is now required for those returning to prison on supervised release violations and who otherwise meet the program's criteria. The course is 12-15 hours in duration. To complete the course, inmates must attend and participate in sessions and pass a final exam. Inmates are generally given at least three chances to pass the exam before they lose privileges. Failure to complete the course, refusal,

withdrawal or expulsion from the course by inmates required to participate will result in the lowest pay and ineligibility for a Federal Prison Industries work assignment.

Non-residential Drug Abuse Program (NR DAP)

- The Non-Residential Drug Abuse Program (NR DAP) is to be available at all Bureau of Prisons institutions. NR DAP is targeted to inmates who are awaiting placement in RDAP; who do not meet RDAP qualifications but wish to benefit from drug abuse treatment; those referred by BOP psychology staff; those prisoners with judicial recommendations for drug treatment who either decline or are not qualified for RDAP; those who have detoxified upon entering BOP; and those who have been found guilty of alcohol or drug use in an institution.

- NR DAP is conducted 90 to 120 minutes per week and lasts a minimum of 12 weeks and a maximum of 24 weeks. Successful completion maybe rewarded by a maximum of \$30 and possible maximum pre-release time in a halfway house.

PROPOSED CHANGE IN CRACK-POWDER SENTENCING: HR 3245, FAIRNESS IN COCAINE SENTENCING ACT

Background

In 1986, Congress enacted the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986.⁵ Acting under the flawed belief that crack cocaine is more dangerous than powder cocaine, Congress enacted a system where it takes 100 times the quantity of powder cocaine to trigger the same mandatory minimum sentences as for crack cocaine. For example, distribution of five grams of crack cocaine yields a five-year mandatory minimum sentence, while it takes 500 grams of powder cocaine to trigger the same five-year minimum. Additionally, this law penalized mere possession of crack cocaine as a felony, making it one of only two drugs for which mere possession is a felony. Finally, this legislation made crack the only drug that triggers a mandatory minimum sentence for mere possession.

Rather than protecting the public from the “exceptional” dangers of crack cocaine, the law’s predominant effect was to incarcerate a disproportionate amount of low-level street dealers, the overwhelming majority of whom were African-American males. In 2008, for example, eighty percent of individuals incarcerated for crack offenses were African-American, and, on average, received sentences that were 19 months greater than powder cocaine sentences.

⁵ Press Release, United State House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary, Conyers bill Passes to End Crack Cocaine Sentencing Disparity (July 29, 2009), available at <http://judiciary.house.gov/news/090729.html>.

Prior to the enactment of the 100-to-1 ratio, the average drug sentence for African-Americans was 11% higher than it was for whites. After enactment, the average drug sentence for African-Americans was 49% higher. Moreover, African-American offenders, on average, serve almost as much time for a drug offense as white offenders serve for a violent offense.⁶ The 100-to-1 drug ratio, has thus been referred to as “the single worst symbol of unfairness in the system.”⁷

Call For Reform

Since 1995, the United States Sentencing Commission has unsuccessfully attempted to reform the disparity between crack and powder cocaine.⁸ Finally, in 2007 the Commission achieved some success. On November 1, 2007, Amendment 706 to the Sentencing Guidelines became effective. Amendment 706 decreased the base offense levels specified by the Guidelines § 2D1.1 drug quantity tables

⁶ See generally Letter from John Payton, Director-Counsel and President, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (Apr. 30, 2009), available at http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/war_on_drugs/LDF_Letter_Congress_Crack_Cocaine_Disparities.pdf.

⁷ Theo Emery, Will Crack-Cocaine Sentencing Reform Help Current Cons? *Time*, Aug. 07, 2009, available at <http://www.time.com/time>.

⁸ Special Report to Congress: Cocaine and Federal Sentencing Policy, United States Sentencing Commission (Feb. 1995), available at <http://www.ussc.gov/crack/EXEC.HTM> (the Commission explicitly rejected the 100-to-1 ratio); see also Cocaine and Federal Sentencing Policy, United States Sentencing Commission (May 2007), available at <http://www.ussc.gov>; and Preliminary Crack Cocaine Retroactivity Data Report, United States Sentencing Commission (Aug. 2008), available at http://www.ussc.gov/USSC_Crack_Cocaine_Retroactivity_Data_Report_30_July_08.pdf

for crack cocaine offenses. The Amendment was made retroactive in March of 2008, which helped to slightly reduce the crack-powder disparity. But this change did not affect the statutory mandatory minimums and the Sentencing Commission itself recognized the amendment as a modest first step toward addressing the disparity in powder and crack cocaine sentencing.⁹

Others have also called for change. The ABA has been attempting to end the disparity in crack offenses since 1995.¹⁰

On the campaign trail, then-presidential candidate Obama pledged that he would eliminate the disparity during his presidency. Post-election, under the Obama administration, the Department of Justice began urging Congress to fix the crack-powder disparity. In April of this year, Lanny A. Breuer, the chief of the Criminal Division in the Justice Department, testified before the Crime and Drugs Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee that many government officials support an end to the crack/powder disparity.¹¹

⁹ As of March 2009, 19,000 inmates had moved for sentence reductions under Amendment 706. Of these 19,000 motions, 70% were granted, resulting in sentence reductions of up to 13-20%.

¹⁰ See generally Over-Criminalization of Conduct/Over-federalization of Criminal Law Before the Sub comm. On Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, 111th Cong. (July 22, 2009) (testimony of Stephen Saltzburg, American Bar Association Representative), available at <http://www.abanet.org>.

¹¹ Justice Dept. Seeks Equity in Sentences for Cocaine, *N.Y. TIMES*, Apr. 29, 2009, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/30/us/cocaine.html>

Additionally, the current Attorney General, Eric Holder, has called the crack-cocaine penalties “simply wrong” and demanded reform. In a speech delivered August 3, 2009, at the 2009 ABA Convention, Attorney General Holder emphasized the need to reform federal sentencing in order to unclog the prisons and reduce the rate of recidivism among released offenders. He described the way in which the DOJ has begun to undertake a comprehensive review of federal sentencing and corrections policy. As part of this review, the DOJ is looking closely at the crack-powder disparity. After this comprehensive review is completed, the DOJ will recommend new legislation to reform the structure of federal sentencing. According to Attorney General Holder, the “tough on crime” approach of the 1980s is no longer working to advance the goals of the criminal justice system. In a prior speech, speaking about the crack powder disparity, Holder stated, “the Department of Justice will never back down from its duty to protect our citizens and our neighborhoods from drugs, or from the violence that all-too-often accompanies the drug trade. But we must discharge this duty in a way that protects our communities as well as the public’s confidence in the justice system.”¹²

H.R. 3245

Rep. Robert C. Scott (D-Va.) sponsored House Bill 3245, known as the Fairness

¹² Atty. Gen. Eric Holder, Remarks as Prepared for Delivery at the National Black Prosecutors Association’s Profiles in Courage Luncheon (July 22, 2009), available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/speeches/2009/ag-speech-0907221.html>.

in Cocaine Sentencing Act, in an effort to eliminate the discriminatory effect of the previous sentencing scheme.¹³ The legislation would remove references to “cocaine base” in the statute and essentially apply the law currently in effect for powder to all forms of cocaine including base. The bill is receiving bipartisan support in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. On July 29, 2009, it cleared the first hurdle – passing the House Judiciary committee by a 16-9 vote. Next, the bill will be considered by the House floor. If it passes, it will then move to the Senate for consideration before going to the President for his veto or signature.

There still remains the question of whether the guideline amendment, if passed, would be retroactive. That is, whether it would apply to those defendants already sentenced and have final judgments. It would require an act of Congress to apply the crack-powder parity to mandatory minimums retroactively. However, HR 3245 is completely silent with regard to retroactivity. Advocates of retroactivity are of the position that if Congress determines now that the law has been unfair for 23 years, it has an obligation to right the law’s wrongs by making the amendment retroactive.

However, case law relating to the application of a new sentencing amendment to post-amendment sentencing for pre-amendment conduct does not prove helpful to the argument for retroactivity. Additionally, the Savings Clause, pursuant to Title 1 of the United States Code §109 provides

¹³ H.R. 3245, 111th Cong. (2009).

that a statute will not be applied retroactively unless explicitly stated in the language of the statute.

Though we are all hopeful, there is no way to predict when or if this bill will be passed, and, if passed, what exactly it will look like and to whom it will and will not apply.

ANY GOOD NEWS ON GOOD TIME?

In the Summer 2006 issue of *The Doing Time Times*, it was reported that the Supreme Court denied review of two cases on the issue of good time credit. Good time is provided for and calculated pursuant to Title 18 § 3624(b). The statute provides in part, that "a prisoner serving a term of imprisonment of more than 1 year other than a term of imprisonment for the duration of the prisoner's life" is eligible for good time credit. The Supreme Court consolidated the like cases and then denied the petitioners' writs of certiorari on the question of whether the phrase "term of imprisonment" means "sentence imposed" or "time served."¹⁴ In doing so, the Court upheld the practice of calculating good time according to the actual amount of time served, rather than according to the court-imposed sentence.

Good time came into effect after parole was abolished. The United States Sentencing Guidelines provide that an inmate will serve the sentence imposed

by the district court less 15% for good behavior. The Federal Bureau of Prisons ("BOP") has the authority to reward good time. Good time credit is served against actual time served, not the sentence imposed by the district court, which is calculated by the BOP using a complex formula.¹⁵ Prisoners earn up to 47 days per year of good time using the BOP's formula. It is also important to note that inmates convicted after April 26, 1996, when the Prison Litigation Reform Act came into effect, are subject to education requirements in order to be eligible to receive good time credit.

According to its director, the BOP is currently having difficulty dealing with overcrowding in the prisons. The BOP proposes that in order to deal efficiently with the overcrowding while still adequately ensuring that inmates successfully reintegrate into society, it is essential to lower the number of inmates and the length of time inmates spend incarcerated. In order to accomplish this, the BOP is working to ensure that all inmates earn as much good time credit as allowed under current law.¹⁶

On September 25, 2008, Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill.) introduced House Bill 7089, which is referred to as the Prison Work Incentive Act. The Act would revive the good time system that existed prior to the Sentencing Reform

¹⁴ *Frequently Asked Questions About Mandatory Minimums*, Families Against Mandatory Minimums (2008) http://www.famm.org/Repository/Files/FINAL_Good_Ti me_FAQs

¹⁵ Stephen R. Sady, *Misinterpretation of the Federal Good Time Statute Costs Prisoners Seven Days Every Year*, 26 CHAMPION 12 (2002).

¹⁶ *House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security Hearing; Federal Bureau of Prisons Oversight*, 111th Cong. (2009) (statement of Harley Lappin, Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons).

Act of 1987. Before the Sentencing Reform Act of 1987, inmates, with the exception of those serving life sentences, were eligible for both Statutory Good Time, pursuant to Title 18 § 4161 and Extra Good Time, pursuant to Title 18 § 4162. The proposed legislation would increase the amount of good time available to inmates,¹⁷ in addition to providing additional opportunities for sentence reduction for working while in prison.

Additionally, the legislation would allow for forfeiture of all good time for prison infractions but would also provide opportunities for restoration of forfeited good time. Good time would still be calculated proportionally to time incarcerated. However, the proposed changes would not be applied retroactively to recalculate good time already determined under the current system.¹⁸ This bill was proposed in a previous session of Congress and referred to the House Judiciary Committee, but had no co-sponsors and

¹⁷ The proposed legislation would entitle an inmate to a deduction from the term of his or her sentence beginning on the day on which the sentence commences to run. An inmate serving a sentence greater than 6 months but less than a year, would be eligible to good time totaling 5 days for each month of the sentence. The number of days per month increases proportionably according to the term of confinement. At most, an inmate serving a sentence greater than 10 years would be eligible for good time credit of 10 days per month. In addition, an inmate could be eligible for up to 5 days per month of industrial good time for exceptional work in the institution. H.R. 7089, 110th Cong. 2d (2008).

¹⁸ For more information on how good time would be calculated under proposed legislation, *see generally* H.R. 7089, 110th Cong., 2d Sess. (2008), *available at* http://thomas.loc.gov/home/gpoxmlc110/h7089_ih.xml.

did not pass. As such, it has been cleared from the record.

On March 12, 2009, Rep. Danny Davis introduced a similar bill entitled the Prison Work Incentive Act of 2009, also referred to as House Bill 1475. The bill is sponsored by 16 other house representatives. House Bill 1475 would have essentially the same effect as the previously proposed Prison Work Incentive Act.¹⁹ On April 27, 2009, the bill was referred to the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security. There has been no further action taken on the bill since it was referred.

Additionally, the Federal Prison Bureau Nonviolent Offender Relief Act of 2009, House Bill 61, was introduced by Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas). The proposed legislation would direct the Bureau of Prisons to release individuals from prison who have served 50 percent or more of a term of imprisonment if a prisoner (1) is 45 years of age or older; (2) has never been convicted of a crime of violence; and (3) has not engaged in any violation, involving violent conduct, of institutional disciplinary regulations. The bill was proposed in an effort to lessen overcrowding in prison and give older inmates an opportunity to reintegrate into society. However, after the bill was proposed on January 26, 2009, it was referred to the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security and no further action has been taken. The House

¹⁹ *See generally* H.R. 1475, 11th Cong. (2009), *available at* <http://capwiz.com/famm/webreturn/?url=http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/H.R.1475>: (*see* footnote 13 for the precise calculation of good time proposed as part of both H.R. 7089 and H.R. 1475.)

Judiciary Committee is not currently scheduled to review the bill and there is no concurrent legislation being considered by the Senate.

While these bills will not likely be enacted into law in the near future, the House is closely monitoring the problems confronting the BOP. The House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security held a hearing on July 21, 2009, to review the BOP's policies in an effort to better understand the current problems within the federal prison system, including budget constraints, overcrowding, insufficient personnel and unsafe facilities. Three groups of individuals were empaneled to discuss various aspects of the growing problems within the system. All three panels, in addition to the legislators and witnesses present at the hearings, were in agreement that something needs to be done to improve the state of the federal prisons.²⁰

STANDARDS ISSUED TO REDUCE PRISON RAPES

In 2003 Congress voted unanimously to enact the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003. This was the first national step toward addressing the problem of sexual abuse in correctional and detention facilities. The act created the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission to study the causes and consequences of sexual abuse in prisons

and to develop binding standards for eliminating abuse.

As part of its investigation, the commission held eight public hearings in which more than 100 witnesses testified, including correctional leaders, survivors of sexual abuse in confinement, researchers, investigators, prosecutors, and advocates for victims and the incarcerated. In addition, the Commission convened expert committees and visited a cross section of jails and prisons.

In the end, on June 23, 2009, the Commission issued its report and standards. The Commission recommended that agencies improve training for prison and jail employees for better detection of assaults. "Sexual abuse is not an inevitable feature of incarceration. Leadership matters because corrections administrators can create a culture within facilities that promotes safety instead of one that tolerates abuse." The Commission called on agencies to do more in risk assessment and classifying vulnerable victims, reduce jail and prison overcrowding, and improve medical and psychological services for victims of sexual abuse. It calls for stiffer penalties for correctional officials who tolerate or engage in abuse. The Commission is calling for better procedures to protect those who report sexual abuse from retaliation, for thorough and competent investigations, and sanctions and prosecutions of perpetrators. The Commission called for external oversight of prisons to reveal why abuse occurs and to prevent it.

²⁰ See generally *Federal Bureau of Prisons Oversight Before the Subcomm. On Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security*, 11th Cong. (2009), available at <http://www.famm.org/Programs/USCongress/FederalpolicyupdatesNewsfromDC/FederalBureauofPrisonsOversightHearing.aspx> (summary of hearing proceedings and a link to audio of the hearing).

Additionally, the Commission said it was particularly concerned about sexual assaults among juveniles confined in adult institutions and among immigrant detainees, many of whom avoid reporting for fear of deportation.

Attorney General Holder has one year to codify the anti-sexual assault procedures, and state governors will have an additional year to comply with those standards or risk losing up to 5 percent of federal financing for corrections.

ACCA "RECALL"

If you were convicted of being a felon-in-possession of a firearm, 18 U.S.C. § 922(g), sentenced as an armed career criminal pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 924(e) in federal court in Wisconsin and one of your predicates (strikes) was a walk-away escape or failure to report, you may write the *Doing Time Times* for a consultation on whether and if the recent Supreme Court decision, *U.S. v. Chambers*, 129 S.Ct. 687 (2009) can benefit you. In your letter please include your name, case number, district of conviction (Eastern or Western District of Wisconsin only) and your predicate offenses.

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