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The Sentencing Guideline

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Editor
Roger E. Goodman
Executive Director
Washington State
Sentencing Guidelines Commission

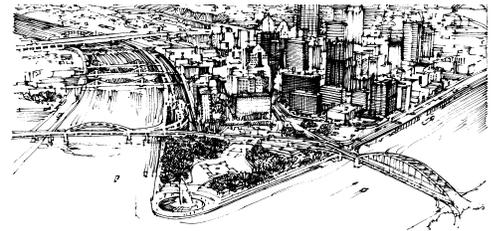
Newsletter Production
Paul O'Connell
Director
Oklahoma
Criminal Justice Resource Center

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2000
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COMMISSIONS
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
August 6-8, 2000**

The 2000 NASC Annual Conference will be held AUGUST 6-8, 2000 at the Westin William Penn, Pittsburgh's Grande Hotel, located in the heart of the city's "Golden Triangle," the downtown business, financial and cultural district.

This seventh annual NASC Conference will feature workshops on sentencing fundamentals, emerging issues and information technologies, as well as provide an opportunity to share ideas, concerns and experiences relating to sentencing policies with people from around the country. Special features this year include a Resource Room and a Three Rivers Dinner Cruise. Conference room rate: \$79.00 (single or double occupancy)



Conference materials will be mailed in March 2000.

For more information, contact:
Mark Bergstrom at (814) 863-4368
mhb105@psu.edu

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ALASKA COMMISSION RECOMMENDS NUMEROUS CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPROVEMENTS

Alaska's Criminal Justice Assessment Commission (CJAC) completed its final report in January 2000 and expects to have it ready to distribute in March 2000. The Commission recommended substantial changes in the ways the state deals with substance abusing offenders, including increased alcohol taxes and revenues to be used partly to pay for treatment of offenders. The Commission also recommended better monitoring of probation conditions for misdemeanants and of pretrial conditions for all offenders, and also wants to see continued efforts to reduce the disparate percentages of various ethnic groups in the criminal justice system.

Alaska Commission recommends substantial changes in the way the state deals with substance abusing offenders.

The CJAC report suggested that the legislature dou-

ble the value of dollar limits for property crimes, raising the bar from a \$500 demarcation between class A misdemeanors and class C felonies. The Commission also made recommendations about the mentally ill and developmentally disabled in the criminal justice system, em-

phasized restorative justice principles and recommended an ongoing organization to implement the Commission's recommendations. Copies of the report will be available in March from the Alaska Judicial Council or from the Council's website in its listing of reports and publications (www.ajc.state.ak.us). For more information, contact:

Teri Carns
Alaska Judicial Council
1029 W. 3rd Ave. Suite 201
Anchorage, AK 99501
907/279-2526 ext. 6
E-mail: teri@ajc.state.ak.us

ALABAMA LEGISLATURE TO ESTABLISH SENTENCING COMMISSION

Two years ago, Alabama's Attorney General and Chief Justice organized representatives from the state's criminal justice system to study sentencing issues, and after more than a year of review, the group concluded that a permanent sentencing commission should be established in Alabama.

In the 2000 Regular Legislative Session, beginning February 1st, legislation was introduced to create the Alabama Sentencing Commission. The 14-member commission would be responsible for designing a structured sentencing system to replace the current system, and

would submit its proposal to the legislature in 2001. If the new structure were to be enacted into law, the commission's role would shift to the more traditional role of state sentencing commissions. An advisory council, including a broader representation of the criminal justice system, would also be appointed to meet with the commission on a yearly basis.

The Attorney General's Office is compiling an in-depth report comparing all states' sentencing commissions as part of the preparation for the upcom-

ing legislative effort to establish a commission in Alabama. This report will be made available to all NASC members when it is completed. For more information, contact:

Maury Mitchell
Assistant Attorney General
State of Alabama
11 South Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130
334/242-7300
E-mail: mmitchell@ago.state.al.us

NEVADA FOCUSING ON “AFTERCARE” FOR PAROLEES

Aftercare grant addresses the need for transitional/residential services for parolees.

Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn in his first State of the State Address promised a “fundamental review” of Nevada state agencies, programs, personnel needs and budgets. He envisioned a comprehensive process, to be completed before the 2001 Legislative Session, based on four basic questions: What is the proper role of state government? What services must we provide? What is the most efficient way to provide those services? And what is the best way to pay for them? The Nevada Advisory Commission on Sentencing took this opportunity to familiarize the Governor with the history and activities of the Commission. His general feeling is that redundant or less-than-productive boards, commissions and/or agencies should be eliminated, combined or restructured to reduce a drain on limited staff resources and to improve state government. The current structure of the Sentencing Commission provides only limited authority or responsibility, and with the passage of legislation in 1995 and the fine-tuning of legislation in 1997 and 1999, the Governor feels it may be time to make changes with regard to the Commission.

For the biennium 2000 – 2001, the Nevada Advisory Commission on Sentencing has developed an aftercare grant proposal through the Violent Offenders Incarceration/Truth in Sentencing federal program in response to the need for a transitional/residential aftercare program for parolees. A study will be developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the program specifically in the area of recidivism by tracking two classes of offenders. This program is a significant stepping-stone for two reasons. First, the 1999 Legislature appropriated funds from the general fund to assist with the required 10% hard cash match, which is unpre-

cedented. Second, success or failure will determine funding participation on the part of the state for correctional alternatives in the future.

The Commission’s additional achievements during the last biennium created legislation which revised the penalty for category E felony, allowing the court to require a person convicted of a category E felony to serve a term of confinement in the county jail as a condition of probation. The Commission also put together legislation requiring courts to report dispositions of cases to the central repository for Nevada records of criminal history. For more information, contact:

Kathalie Koche
 Advisory Commission on Sentencing
 Department of Administration, Budget Division
 209 East Musser Street, Room 200
 Carson City, NV 89701-4298
 Tel: 775/684-0214
 Fax: 775/684-0260
 E-mail: KKoche@govmail.state.nv.us

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NORTH CAROLINA COMMISSION BUSY WITH HOST OF ACTIVITIES

North Carolina's Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission welcomed a newly appointed group of commissioners, and a new chairman, Superior Court Judge W. Erwin Spainhour, in the summer of 1999. While the ongoing work of the Commission continued in tracking legislative changes, assisting in policy decisions and providing data and statistical analysis for the criminal and juvenile justice systems of the state, the focus has shifted in the past six months to include a variety of outreach efforts:

Training -- Staff conducted a series of statewide training sessions for criminal justice professionals on legal aspects of structured sentencing and its uniform application. Incorporating observations and comments from the field, the

Commission is publishing a revised and expanded training manual in January 2000.

Site Visits -- In an effort to better understand and evaluate the state's correctional programs, Commission staff conducted extensive on-site interviews and observations in a variety of prisons and community based facilities. Part of a mandated recidivism study, the visits will be summarized in descriptive monographs to profile the various programs and correctional modalities.

Public Briefings -- In order to increase public understanding of North Carolina's sentencing reform, its underlying principles, major features and early effectiveness, the Commission offered regional briefings for local government and county officials, court personnel, policy makers, the media and other interested groups. The educational component included a comparative presentation of the criminal justice system prior to and following the enactment of the reform, and the presentation of a two-part video on structured sentencing

(*Sense in Sentencing* and *Beyond Bars* are available upon request from the Commission).

Simulation Workshop -- The Commission is planning to offer a "hands-on" workshop on correctional population projections. The emphasis will be on both the technical and policy-related aspects of simulation and the political context within which it is prepared and utilized. Participants and experts from all states will be invited to share their experiences. The workshop is scheduled for May 11th and 12th, in Raleigh, NC. Both the public briefings and simulation workshop are outreach efforts funded by the Ford Foundation's Innovations in American Government award. For more information, contact:

Susan Katzenelson
Executive Director
North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 2472
Raleigh, NC 27602
Tel: 919/733-9543
Fax: 919/733-2991
E-mail: susank@mail-hub.aoc.state.nc.us
Website: www.aoc.state.nc.us/spac

ANNOUNCEMENT

The North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission announces a Spring Workshop on correctional population projections to be held May 11th and 12th in Raleigh, North Carolina. The workshop will focus on technical aspects of population projection and policy uses and implications. Details are forthcoming.

If you are interested, please contact:
North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 2472
Raleigh, NC 27602
(919) 733-9543
(919) 733-2991 (fax)
email: susank@mail-hub.aoc.state.nc.us

OHIO COMMISSION WORKS TO SAVE JUVENILE PLAN

Policy and cost differences have slowed legislative progress on the Ohio Sentencing Commission's juvenile sentencing proposals. The

Commission's recommendations appeared in its Fall 1999 report, *A Plan for Juvenile Sentencing in Ohio*. The report spawned Senate Bill 279, a 600-page measure currently before the Senate Judiciary Committee, sponsored by the Committee's Chairman, Senator Robert Latta.

It would allow offenders as

The Commission's plan calls for rolling back mandatory transfers to adult courts and substituting blended juvenile/adult sentences for certain serious juvenile offenders.

young as 10 and as old as 25 to be held in state juvenile facilities. It also would create juvenile competency procedures for Ohio.

The Administration worries about added costs, since more juveniles would be retained – potentially for longer periods – in the state's expensive juvenile system. Recently, the Administration has warmed to the Commission's blended sentencing approach, abandon-

ing its own alternative plan. However, the Administration remains reticent about extending jurisdiction beyond age 21 and about the costs and programs needed to implement the Commission's competency proposals. Decisions must be made soon, since Ohio's new March primary date will shorten the legislative calendar in 2000. For more information, contact:

David Diroll
Executive Director
Ohio Sentencing Commission
513 E. Rich Street, Suite 100
Columbus, OH 43215
Tel: 614/466-1833
E-mail: dirolld@sconet.ohio.gov

OKLAHOMA REPEALS STRUCTURED SENTENCING

The 1999 legislative session saw the repeal of the controversial Truth in Sentencing Bill, H.B. 1213 before it was ever implemented. The bill, touted as a complete reform package for Oklahoma's criminal justice system, incorporated structured sentencing guidelines with a community corrections component. The bill was repealed after two years of delayed implementation and two special sessions called by the governor to, among other issues, "fix" the concerns of different factions opposed to the bill. In an effort to salvage a portion of the bill, House Bills 1008 and 1009 were eventually passed and signed by the governor. HB

1008 established "truth in sentencing" for eleven felony offenses labeled the "eleven deadly sins". Offenders under the bills provisions, will serve 85% of a prison sentence for these select offenses. HB Bill 1009 allows for limited community corrections programming. Local community corrections planning councils will be allowed to develop intermediate sanctions in their jurisdictions limited only by state appropriations. Both bills have an implementation date of March 2000.

The Oklahoma Sentencing Commission remains intact

with the passage of these bills. Its duties continue to be: making recommendations to the legislature for the modification of crimes, recodification of crimes, modification of sentencing laws and policies and for the addition, deletion or expansion of sentencing options. The Commission is also to report to the legislature the results of a study relating to statewide sentencing practices. For more information contact:

Paul O'Connell
Director
Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource
Center
5500 N. Western, Suite 245
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73118
(405) 858-7025
E-mail: poconnel@oklaosf.state.ok.us

PENNSYLVANIA EXPANDS USE OF SENTENCING DATA

During 1999, the Pennsylvania Commission dedicated substantial resources to the improvement of its sentencing data in terms of quality, timeliness and availability. In any given year, over 100,000 sentences are reported to the Commission. This sentencing information is used to monitor compliance with guidelines and mandatory sentencing laws, as well as to study the effectiveness of sentences imposed. The Commission is also required by statute to disseminate information on Pennsylvania sentencing practices. While this requirement was previously satisfied with publication of an *Annual Report* that provided aggregate sentencing information, the Commission's new *Release of Information Policy*, for the first time, will make available judge-specific sentencing data.

As part of this policy, the Commission implemented a new component of its data verification process. In addition to the Commission's internal data verification, nearly 400 criminal court judges were sent copies of the data that the Commission had collected on sentences handed down in their county courts. Pertinent descriptive information about the offender, the conviction offense and the sentence were provided. Reasons given by the judges for the

sentences were also printed.

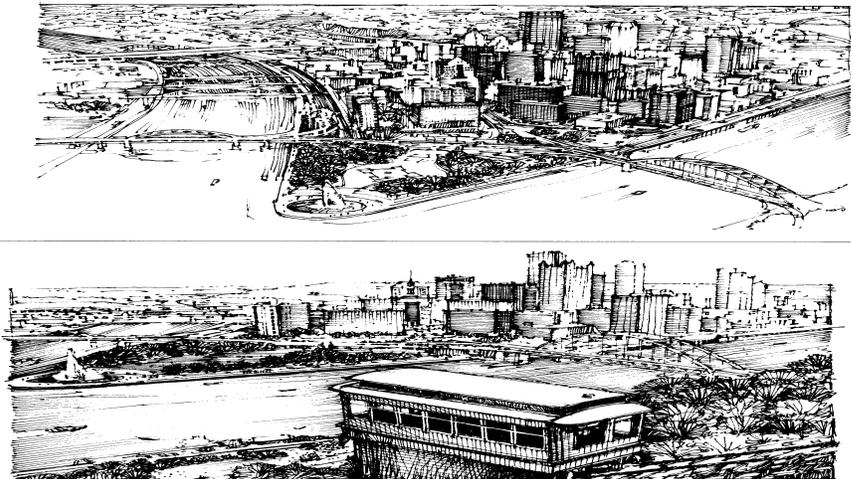
There were 69,375 records printed, representing the most serious offense per judicial proceeding. The judges were asked to verify that the data were accurate. Judges were permitted to correct any errors that had occurred in the data-entry process and to make corrections to the data that were substantiated by court records. Only 1,324 records (or less than 2%) were edited as a result of this new verification process.

On February 2, 2000, the Commission is holding an educational seminar on the use of the Commission's sentencing data specifically targeting the

media. The purpose of the seminar is to provide contextual information on statewide sentencing statutes, guidelines and practices in Pennsylvania, to describe Commission sentencing information available to the media and to discuss the procedures for obtaining sentencing data under the Commission's *Release of Information Policy*. For more information, contact:

Mark H. Bergstrom
Executive Director
The Pennsylvania Commission
on Sentencing
P. O. Box 1200
State College, PA 16804-1200
Tel: 814/863-2797
Fax: 814/863-2129
E-Mail: mhb105@psu.edu
Website: <http://pcs.la.psu.edu>

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SOUTH CAROLINA LEGISLATURE CONSIDERING SENTENCING

The South Carolina Sentencing Guidelines Commission, chaired by David Wilkins, Speaker of the House of Representatives, has begun the 2000 legislative session, and the Commission is optimistic about the prospective passage of H.3108, the Sentencing Guidelines/Truth in Sentencing bill passed by the South Carolina House of Representatives in the 1999 session. The bill has been assigned to a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, which is holding early hearings on the matter. The Commission is hopeful that H.3108 will be signed into law this year.

The Commission continues to work closely with the South Carolina Department of Corrections and with the Department of Probation, Pardon and Parole Services to maintain accurate sentencing data and to track sentencing

S.C. Commission optimistic about passing a Sentencing Guideline/Truth in Sentencing Bill

trends. The sentencing grid and score-sheet were recently tested in General Sessions courts in several counties around the state to ensure that the information and recommendations with which the Commission works are both current and viable in a fast-paced court setting. The results were all positive and the staff received much positive feedback from circuit judges and from solicitors. For more information, contact:

Elizabeth Waldrep
Director
South Carolina
Sentencing Guidelines Commission
1105 Pendleton Street, Suite 220
Columbia, SC 29201
Tel: 803/734-6200
Fax: 803/734-8727
E-mail: ewaldrep@usit.net

UTAH COMMISSION PARTNERS WITH CRIME REDUCTION TASK FORCE

A Utah Legislative Crime Reduction Task Force has considered and adopted, among other things, recommendations from the Utah Sentencing Commission concerning intermediate sanctions. These alternatives to prison are specifically aimed at substance abusers and will additionally include an approach dealing with parolees. The Task Force's proposals during the 2000 General Legislative Session will include statewide expansion of drug courts and piloting a similar concept with parolees dubbed "drug board" (referring to the Board of Pardons and Parole).

This is the latest action in an ongoing study of intermediate sanctions by the Utah Sentencing Commission. Other alternatives to

prison resulting from the study include day reporting centers, community correctional centers and juvenile intermediate sanctions titled "state supervision." The Commission is also beginning a longitudinal evaluation of a privatized community correctional center targeting drug offenders. Results will focus upon recidivism rates for those sentenced to prison for drug offenses versus those sentenced to this new alternative. The Commission will be tracking and reviewing its sentencing guidelines to better reflect the expansion of such intermediate sanctions.

Other crime reduction efforts from the Sentencing Commission involve reform of several sentencing enhancements including a gang enhancement which was recently struck down by

FULL SLATE OF MEMBERS CONFIRMED AT U. S. SENTENCING COMMISSION

U.S. Circuit Judge Diana E. Murphy of Minneapolis, Minnesota, following her nomination by President Clinton and Senate confirmation on November 10, 1999, has been confirmed as the new chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission FULL SLATE OF MEMBERS CONFIRMED AT U. S. SENTENCING COMMISSION.

The U.S. Senate also confirmed the following new commissioners: U.S. District Court Judge Ruben Castillo of Chicago, Illinois; U.S. District Court Judge Sterling Johnson, Jr. of Queens, New York; U. S. District Court Judge Joe Kendall of Dallas, Texas; Professor Michael O'Neill of Chevy Chase, Maryland; U.S. District Court Judge William K. Sessions, III of Cornwall, Vermont; and Mr. John R. Steer of Fairfax Station, Virginia. These seven voting commissioners join *ex officio* members Mr. Michael J. Gaines of the United States Parole Commission and Mr. Laird C. Kirkpatrick of the United States Department of Justice. The Commission had been without any voting commissioners since October 31, 1998.

The U.S. Sentencing Commission, an independent agency in the judicial branch of the federal government, was organized in 1985 to develop a national sentencing strategy for the federal courts. The resulting guidelines, which went into effect November 1, 1987, structure courts' sentencing discretion to ensure that similar offenders who commit similar offenses receive similar sentences.

"I know I speak for all the commissioners when I say that we are honored to have been chosen by the President and confirmed by the Senate to serve on this truly important commission. I am further gratified that I will be working with such a distinguished group of commissioners. Many challenges lie ahead for us as commissioners, and I know that all of us are eager to roll up our sleeves and get started."

*The Honorable Diana E. Murphy, Chairperson
U.S. Sentencing Commission*

The Sentencing Commission is composed of seven voting members, at least three of whom must be federal judges selected after considering a list of six judges recommended to the President by the Judicial Conference of the United States and two non-voting *ex officio* members. No more than four commissioners may be members of the same political party, and no voting member may serve for more than two full six-

Utah Continued...

a new approach for hate crimes sentencing and evaluation of the effect of earlier intervention through juvenile sentencing guidelines adopted two years ago. For more information, contact:

Ed McConkie
Director
Utah Sentencing Commission
101 State Capitol
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114
(801) 538-1645
(801) 538-1024 FAX
E-mail: emcconki@gov.state.ut.us
visit our web page at www.sentencing.state.ut.us

year terms. For more information, contact:

Tim McGrath
Staff Director
United States Sentencing Commission
One Columbus Circle, N.E., Suite 2-500
South Lobby
Washington, DC 20002-8002
Tel: 202.502.4500
Fax: 202.502.4699
Website: ussc.gov

WASHINGTON REVAMPS SYSTEM OF COMMUNITY SUPERVISION OF OFFENDERS

In 1999 the Washington State Legislature enacted the "Offender Accountability Act," which fundamentally changed the way offenders will be supervised in the community after their release. Courts and the Corrections Department are now authorized to impose "affirmative conditions" on offenders, such as rehabilitative treatment, and the Corrections Department will have more direct control over offenders in the community, including the authority to sanction offenders for violations of conditions of their community supervision (including confinement) *without* the involvement of the courts. Offenders are being managed according to their risk of re-offending, as measured by a research-proven risk assessment tool that is administered to all offenders. The Corrections Department will focus its attention on the highest-risk offenders in the community in order to maximize its limited resources.

As part of the "Offender Accountability Act," the Legislature directed the Sentencing Guidelines Commission to establish a new set of "community custody ranges" to be included in all prison sentences for those offenders who are required to be

supervised in the community after their release. As of July 1, 2000, sentencing courts will order eligible offenders to serve a determinate period in confinement as well as a range of time to be supervised in the community. The community portion of the sentence will be called "community custody."

"Offender Accountability Act ensures more control of offenders supervised in the community"

After a year of intensive deliberations, the Commission finally devised the set of community custody ranges for sex offenses (36 to 48 months), "serious violent" offenses (24 to 48 months), violent offenses (18 to 36 months), "crimes against persons" (9 to 18 months for those offenses that don't fall into a more serious category) and drug offenses (9 to 12 months). Offenders are required to be supervised for at least the minimum of their community custody range, at which time the Department of Corrections will have the discretion to release them or to continue supervising them. The Legislature is currently considering whether to modify the Commission's proposed community custody

ranges, but legislative action will not be necessary for these new ranges to become effective, as the Commission has been given the authority to effect them through a rulemaking process.

Where risk has been added as a key factor in classifying and supervising offenders, and where courts may consider an offender's risk to public safety as part of the sentencing decision, the Commission will be closely following the implementation of the new regime. The Commission will be monitoring the extent to which the consideration of risk affects the purposes of Washington's sentencing system, which include proportionality, equality, protection of the public, rehabilitation and the frugal use of local and state resources. For more information, contact:

Roger E. Goodman
Executive Director
Washington State Sentencing Guidelines
Commission
P.O. Box 40927
Olympia, WA 98504-0927
Tel: 360/956-2132
Fax: 360/956-2149
E-mail: goodmanr@sgc.wa.go

D.C. COMMISSION RELEASES FIRST COMPREHENSIVE SENTENCING REPORT

The District of Columbia Advisory Commission on Sentencing and the Urban Institute provided the first comprehensive look at sentencing and parole release practices in Washington, D.C. in a report issued on September 30, 1999. The next report, due in April 2000, will provide the City Council with the Commission's recommendations on a range of criminal justice issues.

Both reports, mandated by statute, come at a critical time in the District's modern history. The District's criminal justice system is facing dramatic change. In passing the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997, Congress mandated that:

offenders who commit most serious felonies (including murder, rape, carjacking and repeat drug offenses) must serve at least 85% of a determinate prison sentence;

parole is abolished for offenders convicted of committing most serious felonies; and

offenders must serve a period of supervised release following release from prison.

These changes in law apply for offenses committed on or after August 5, 2000. The

Commission began its work by collecting, through research staff of the Urban Institute, sentencing-related data from the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, the Pretrial Services Agency, the D.C. Department of Corrections and the D.C. Board of Parole. The scope of the data collection and analysis effort was substantial. For example, starting with 670,000 felony charge records from D.C. Superior Court covering the period from 1978 through 1998, a file of the most recent six years of sentencing data was created. 17,332 felony offense cases were handled in Superior Court from 1993 through 1998. Fifteen years of D.C. offender criminal histories were obtained from automated records maintained by the Pretrial Services Agency and supplemented by manual coding of national criminal history records to provide prior record information both in and out of the District. Similarly, corrections and parole records were also collected and analyzed. The resulting statistical analyses are discussed in the September 30, 1999 report. The Commission outlined the demographic characteristics and criminal history of felony offenders, the sentences imposed on felony offenders and parole release decisions. Work continues in an attempt to estimate accurately the time served on felony sentences.

The analyses of recent past practice will provide important insights for future decisions in such areas as retention of parole and structured sentencing. By April 5, 2000, the Commission is to submit a report to the Council with its recommendations on

these matters:

1. whether to abolish parole for all criminal offenses;

2. whether to amend or to repeal the Youth Rehabilitation Act;

3. appropriate terms and conditions for the supervision of offenders following their release from prison;

4. the appropriate length of a sentence for an offender who faces a life sentence;

5. whether intermediate sanctions (*i.e.*, punishment that is more severe than probation, but less severe than prison) or alternatives to incarceration should be available, and if so, what programs are best for what types of offenders;

6. the impact of any recommendation on the District's inmate population and supervised offender population; and

7. whether sentencing guidelines are appropriate for the District of Columbia. For further information, contact:

Kim S. Hunt, Ph.D.
Executive Director
District of Columbia Advisory Commission on Sentencing
800 K Street, N.W.
Suite 450 South
Washington, D.C. 20001
Tel: 202/353-7794

Temporary E-mail address:
khunt@crim.umd.edu

KANSAS FACES IMPENDING PRISON BED SHORTAGES

As Kansas begins its 2000 legislative session, one of the major issues it faces is the state's increasing prison population and limited prison capacity. Prison population projections, released by the Sentencing Commission, forecast that the state will run out of prison beds by the end of the current fiscal year. In reviewing the data, the increase in prison growth is the result of two factors occurring simultaneously. First, a significantly increasing number of conditional parole violators are being returned to prison; and second, the "stacking" effect of longer sentences is being fully realized.

The Commission spent a considerable amount of time in the fall of 1999 discussing and reviewing various options. In December, the Commission voted to adopt the following recommenda-

tions that are being presented in bill form during the legislative session:

1) the amount of county jail time that can be imposed as a condition of probation be in-

Kansas Sentencing Commission is responsible for developing recommendations to be presented to the legislature to reduce prison admissions or to adjust sentence lengths.

creased from 30 to 120 days;

2) the period of post-release supervision for lower level severity levels be adjusted from 24 months to either 6 or 12 months, depending on the severity level; and

3) all conditional probation violators must be placed in a community corrections program prior to a revocation resulting in incarceration in a state correctional facility.

In addition, the Commission drafted legislation, which identifies a target population for placement in community corrections programs. To add to the urgency of the inadequate number of prison beds, the state is experiencing a fiscal crisis. With shortfalls in revenues, the state's ability to proceed with new prison construction is limited. It can be anticipated that this will be a very long and contentious legislative session. For more information, contact:

Barbara Tombs
Executive Director
Kansas Sentencing Commission
700 SW Jackson Street, Suite 501
Topeka, KS 66603
Phone: 785/296-0923
Fax: 785/296-0927
E-mail: btombs@ink.org
Web Site: www.ink.org/public/ksc

PERMANENT MARYLAND COMMISSION BEGINS ITS WORK

The State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy in Maryland recently named a new Executive Director. Michael Connelly previously served as Director of Special Projects at the Justice Research and Statistics Association in Washington, D.C., and previously as Director of Research for the Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center. In that capacity he had staffed the Oklahoma Sentencing Commission. In his new Maryland position he succeeds Kim Hunt, who is now Executive Director of the District of Columbia Sentencing Commission.

Maryland's State Commission on Criminal

Sentencing Policy was created in the 1999 legislative session to oversee operation of the state's voluntary sentencing guidelines. Its creation was recommended by its predecessor, the Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy, which was a policy advisory body. The current Commission Chair is Judge Andrew Sonner from the Maryland Court of Special Appeals.

The new Commission's functions will include data collection and reports on sentencing and recommendations concerning development of correctional alternatives. Its three permanent

Maryland continued...

subcommittees reflect its major concerns: Sentencing Guidelines, Corrections Options, and Data and Research (which will focus initially on compliance statistics). A special focus will be the coordination of the Commission's work with state executive plans for development of some form of corrections options authority. For more information contact:

Michael Connelly
Executive Director
State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy
2220 LeFrak Hall
College Park, MD 20742-8235
office: 301-403-4165
fax: 301-403-4164
e-mail: mconnelly@crim.umd.edu

**SENTENCING GUIDELINES BILL PENDING
BEFORE MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE**

One controversial matter associated with the guidelines legislation involves the relationship between sentencing guidelines and mandatory sentencing. The commission proposed integrating drug offenses with long mandatory minimum sentences into the guidelines grid. This would provide a judge with the option to impose a sentence within the guideline range or to impose the mandatory minimum term. This approach to mandatory sentencing is supported by judges and the defense bar but is opposed by prosecutors and the governor, who are generally skeptical about any changes to mandatory sentencing.

The sentencing guidelines legislation was re-filed for consideration in the 1999/2000 legislative session after a legis-

lative committee recommended further study of the measure in the previous session. Hearings on the proposed legislation were held in May 1999 before the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice. As at

The most important sentencing issue in Massachusetts is the fate of the sentencing guidelines legislation proposed by the Sentencing Commission, presently pending before the Legislature.

previous hearings, there was strong judicial support for the proposed guidelines but opposition from prosecutors and the governor, particularly with respect to the mandatory sentencing proposal. The hope is that this legislation will come before the Legislature for a vote by the summer of 2000.

On the research front, the Massachusetts Sentencing Com-

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For more information, contact:

Roger E. Goodman
Executive Director
Washington State Sentencing
Guidelines Commission
P.O. Box 40927
Olympia, WA 98504-0927
Tel: 360/956-2132
Fax: 360/956-2149
E-mail: goodmanr@sgc.wa.go

mission recently published a Survey of Sentencing Practices for the period FY 1998. This survey provides sentencing data on the 74,694 defendants convicted in Massachusetts during FY 1998. The FY 1999 survey is due out in early 2000. The Commission also updated its *Felony and Misdemeanor Master Crime List*. This is a detailed guide to the proposed sentencing guidelines and a useful reference tool to the criminal statutes in Massachusetts. Copies of the surveys and *Master Crime List* are available upon request. For more information, contact:

Francis J. Carney, Jr.
Executive Director
Massachusetts Sentencing Commission
90 Devonshire Street, Room 1143
Boston, MA 02109
Tel: 617/788-6867
Fax: 617/788-6885
E-mail: masentcomm@jud.state.ma.

MINNESOTA COMMISSION INITIATES ELECTRONIC SENTENCING DATA PROJECT, ALSO STUDYING DRUG SENTENCING PRACTICES

The Commission has been quite active and is engaged in two major projects. The first is a technology project that will create and implement a web-based application to allow probation officers to complete and submit an electronic version of the "sentencing worksheet" to the Commission office as well as to other criminal justice practitioners. The sentencing worksheet is a form used to share necessary information about the application of the sentencing guidelines for convicted felons. Probation officers are responsible for completing the form when an offender has been convicted of a felony. Currently, a paper copy of the form is sent to the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney and the Commission office. The web-based electronic application will reduce the effort it takes to complete and send this information and will eliminate the need for the Commission staff to key the worksheet information manually into a database. In addition, the Commission will be storing the electronic worksheet information in a retrievable database to allow probation officers access to previously completed worksheets and access to worksheets from Minnesota counties other than their own. The project fits into a larger statewide effort currently underway to create a true integrated criminal justice information system.

The second project involves a study of the current drug laws and sentencing practices. In 1989, Minnesota adopted new detailed drug laws with penalties based on the type

mission plans to survey criminal justice practitioners to gain greater insight into the actual important sentencing criteria regarding drug offenders. The Commission is also interested in learning more about drug sentencing policies and practices in other jurisdictions. This study may result in recommended changes to the sentencing guidelines and to state laws. For more information, contact:

The Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission has six of eleven new members following the election of the new Governor.

and amount of a specific drug and whether the drug is sold or possessed. Since then, the departure rate from the recommended guideline sentences has been quite high for drug offenses with offenders typically getting less prison time or receiving probation rather than the recommended prison sentence. In addition, African-Americans are particularly disproportionately represented among sentenced drug offenders and among those drug offenders sentenced to prison. The Com-

Debra Dailey
Executive Director
Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines
Commission
200 University Avenue West, #205
St. Paul, MN 55103
Tel: 651/296-0727
Fax: 651/297-5757
E-mail: deb.dailey@state.mn.us

National Association of Sentencing Commissions

Mission:
"to facilitate the exchange of ideas, data and expertise among sentencing commissions and to educate and inform policymakers and the public on issues related to sentencing policies and sentencing commissions."



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National Association of Sentencing Commissions
% Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center
5500 N. Western
Suite 245
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73118

Phone: (405) 858-7025
Fax: (405) 858-7040

