

Sentencing

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whom they feel should be put under the guidelines, which in many cases is minorities."

Mauer said that mandatory minimums do not fight recidivism, the rate of returns to prison. Plus, he said, drug abuse and selling of drugs have not been stemmed.

U.S. District Court Judge Paul Cassell, who serves on the Judicial Conference of the United States Criminal Law Conference, said that surveys conducted by his organization show that three-fourths of the American people would want a mandatory minimum sentence set aside if another sentence for a defendant was more appropriate.

"Each offender who comes before a federal judge for sentencing deserves to have their individual facts and circumstances considered in determining a just sentence," Cassell said.

Nunn agrees with Cassell. She plans on becoming a public defender and to continue to speak out against mandatory minimums and unfair sentencing.

"Mandatory minimums should be abolished to allow judges to regain their sentencing discretion," she said.

The hearing was mostly a fact-finding exercise, Scott said. Conyers said that there will be additional hearings on the subject before legislation is considered that would alter or dismantle the mandatory minimums.

James Wright writes for Afro-American Newspapers.

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