

Rep. Maxine Waters Finds "Youthful Indiscretions" Last Decades Under Today's Mandatory Minimum Sentencing Laws

While George W. Bush asks for forgiveness for his alleged "youthful indiscretions" involving drug use, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) sponsors a press conference and forum to illustrate how unforgiving America is of today's youthful drug offenders. The forum, "How America's Drug Policies are Imprisoning our Communities," is a highlight of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Legislative Conference this Thursday.

Waters, sponsor of a bill to repeal mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenders, reports that 52 percent of the drug defendants sentenced to federal prison in 1998 for "simple possession" were under age 30, and 88 percent of all federal drug defendants sentenced that year were unarmed. Yet, on average federal drug defendants in 1998 received sentences of 76.2 months in prison. A high price for a "youthful indiscretion."

To examine the unforgiving treatment of today's drug offenders, Rep. Waters' pulls from the front lines of America's drug war: forum speakers include prosecutors, the police, the judiciary, and families affected by the laws. They join a growing chorus of opposition to mandatory sentencing that includes prominent conservatives Chief Justice William Rehnquist, Supreme Court Justices Stephen Breyer and Anthony Kennedy, criminologist John DiIulio, former attorney general Edwin Meese, and pundits Arriana Huffington and William Buckley.

**WHAT: Press Conference and Issue Forum: "How America's Drug Policies are
Imprisoning our Communities."**

WHO: Sponsor: Rep. Maxine Waters, Member, House Committee on the Judiciary

SPEAKERS: Ernest Preate, former Pennsylvania Attorney General
Judge Evelyn Crawford Queen, District of Columbia Drug Court
Pat Nolan, former California Assembly Republican Leader
Eric Sterling, Esq., President of the Criminal Justice Policy Foundation
Carmen Hernandez, Esq., The Federal Defender Training Group
Paul Butler, Esq., Visiting Law Professor,
University of Pennsylvania School of Law
Laura Hankins, Esq., NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund
Gus and Odessa Smith, parents of prisoner Kemba Smith
Julie Stewart, President, Families Against Mandatory Minimums

**WHEN: THURSDAY, September 16, 1999
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

**WHERE: 29th Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Legislative Conference,
Washington Convention Center, 9th & G Streets, NW, Rooms 13-15**