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## Cong. Rangel: Bill To Narrow Cocaine Sentencing Disparities is an Important First Step

July 29, 2010 | [Press Releases](#)

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WASHINGTON - Congressman Charles Rangel announced Wednesday's passage of a bill to reduce the disparity in penalties for crack versus powder cocaine offenses. Both the House and the Senate, the bill now goes to President Obama for signature.

The bill would reduce the ratio for crack and powder cocaine sentences from 100 to 18-to-1. New sentencing guidelines would also eliminate the mandatory minimum sentence for simple possession of crack, the only drug for which possession leads to mandatory sentences.

"I welcome the enactment of this bill which takes a substantial step in narrowing disparity in sentencing for crack and powder cocaine," said Congressman Rangel, who has long advocated for a change in the law. "That inequality in punishment has played a major role in feeding the nation's jail population, and has had a disproportionate impact on minorities. The legislation is an important first step toward full equality in application of drug laws."

The Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 would raise the minimum quantity of crack cocaine that triggers a 5-year mandatory minimum from 5 grams to 28 grams, and from 50 grams to trigger a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence.

The amount of powder cocaine required to trigger the 5 and 10-year mandatory minimum remains the same, at 500 grams and 5 kilograms respectively.

According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, the approved changes to the current penalties for crack cocaine offenses could impact nearly 3,000 defendants a year by reducing their average sentence 27 months. The Commission projects that 10 years after enactment the changes could produce a prison population reduction of about 3,800 inmates.

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