

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**KENNEDY RESPONDS TO SUPREME COURT DECISION ON CRACK
COCAINE PENALTIES**

WASHINGTON, DC— Today, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, released the following statement in response to the decision made by the Supreme Court on crack cocaine sentencing.

“It’s obvious from today’s Supreme Court decision in the *Kimbrough* case that Federal Courts at every level face an impossible challenge in attempting to deal with the unfair and unwarranted disparity in the current sentencing guidelines, under which trafficking in crack cocaine is 100 times harsher than trafficking in the same amount of powder cocaine. The crack-powder disparity has a disproportionate impact on African-American defendants, their families and communities. This gross disparity undermines public confidence in the criminal justice system and is completely contrary to the Sentencing Reform Act’s goal of fairness in sentencing.

I’ve joined with Senator Hatch on legislation, S. 1685, that takes two important steps to reducing this disparity. It reduces the disparity by 80 percent, and it eliminates the mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years for first-time possession of crack cocaine.

Our harshest punishments for drug traffickers should go to the high level traffickers who truly deserve them.”

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