

THE U.S. SENTENCING COMMISSION

YEAR IN REVIEW

- The holdover status of Commissioners Michael S. Gelacak, Michael Goldsmith, and Deanell R. Tacha expired with the adjournment of the 105th Congress on October 21, 1998. On October 31, 1998, former U.S. Sentencing Commission chair, Judge Richard P. Conaboy, resigned to allow for the appointment of a new, full slate of commissioners.
- At the direction of the previous Commission, Commission staff continued to work on the proposed comprehensive rewrite of the loss definition for fraud and theft offenses.
- During 1999, Commission staff prepared briefing materials to assist incoming commissioners with legislative directives such as The No Electronic Theft Act of 1997, The Wireless Telephone Protection Act of 1998, The Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998, and The Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act of 1998.
- Commission staff also prepared briefing materials in regard to various pieces of legislation enacted by the 105th Congress that did not contain explicit directives to the Commission (*e.g.*, the Methamphetamine Trafficking Penalty Enhancement Act of 1998 and legislation regarding firearms offenses) but nevertheless may warrant changes to the guidelines.
- As part of its ongoing effort to engage the public in sentencing issues, Commission staff held a February 1999 briefing on the various issues under study. Congressional staff, members of the defense bar, staff representatives of the Judicial Conference's Criminal Law Committee, members of the Commission's Practitioners' Advisory Group and Probation Officers Advisory Group, and community and public defenders were among those in attendance.
- In May 1999, the Commission again co-sponsored the National Seminar on the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, held in Clearwater Beach, Florida. This program was attended by approximately 150 federal probation officers and 150 defense attorneys from across the country.
- Commission staff continued to work collaboratively with the Federal Judicial Center and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) to plan and develop educational and informational programming for the Federal Judicial Television Network.
- In furtherance of its mandate to promote research and disseminate information on sentencing, the Commission in early fall published its catalog which lists and describes the Commission's available publications, data, and information resources.
- Also in the fall, Commission staff made a number of presentations at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology. Topics included counterfeiting offenses, changes in federal sentencing severity, and federal practices in immigration cases.
- In 1999, the Commission received documentation on approximately 55,000 cases sentenced under the guidelines. The Commission coded and assimilated the information from these

sentencings into its comprehensive, automated data collection system started in 1989 and which contains approximately 500,000 cases.

- The Commission's training staff continued to provide guideline application and sentencing-related training to judges, probation officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and others. During 1999, Commission staff trained more than 3,300 individuals at 48 training sessions, including ongoing programs sponsored by the Federal Judicial Center and the Department of Justice.
- The Commission's "HelpLine" provided guideline application assistance to approximately 200 calls a month.
- The Commission continued to rely on its popular Internet site (*www.usc.gov*) as a means of providing information about the agency and its work. The Commission's home page was visited approximately 8,000 times a month in 1999.
- During 1999, Commission staff also received and responded to numerous information requests from Congress, attorneys, government agencies, researchers, inmates and their families, and the public.
- On November 15, 1999, the President appointed U.S. Circuit Judge Diana E. Murphy of Minneapolis, Minnesota, as the new chair of the Commission. The President also appointed as new commissioners Judge Ruben Castillo of Chicago, Illinois; Judge Sterling Johnson, Jr. of Queens, New York; Judge Joe Kendall of Dallas, Texas; Professor Michael O'Neill of Chevy Chase, Maryland; Judge William K. Sessions, III of Cornwall, Vermont; and Mr. John R. Steer of Fairfax Station, Virginia. The new commissioners join *ex-officio* members Mr. Michael J. Gaines and Mr. Laird C. Kirkpatrick.