



2026 AMENDMENTS IN BRIEF

In April 2026, the U.S. Sentencing Commission approved amendments to the federal sentencing guidelines. For a more detailed discussion of the policy determinations made by the Commission, please refer to the *Reason for Amendment* in the “Reader-Friendly” and Official Text (link in QR code).

2026 Amendment Sentencing Options

This amendment revises Part A of Chapter Five by adding **Introductory Commentary** and a new guideline at §5A1.1.

The **Introductory Commentary** recognizes that courts must balance a broad range of factors to achieve a sentence that is “sufficient, but not greater than necessary to comply with the purposes set forth in [18 U.S.C. § 3553(a)(2)],” and that each option—imprisonment, probation, and fines—serves a punitive function.

New §5A1.1 incorporates the existing Sentencing Table and adds two provisions that describe its structure and operation. Subsection (b) provides a table that lists the sentencing options available within each zone in the Sentencing Table, with cross-references to the relevant provisions of Chapter Five.

THE ISSUE

Selecting the Appropriate Sentence

By setting forth the operation of the Sentencing Table and clearly delineating a court’s guideline sentencing options before the Sentencing Table, the Commission intends to further assist courts in determining the appropriate sentence—both sentence length and sentence type—and to highlight the importance that the Commission and its enabling legislation place on the determination of sentence type.

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