

THE U.S. SENTENCING COMMISSION

YEAR IN REVIEW

- Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, at an investiture ceremony held at the Supreme Court of the United States on January 5, administered the oath of office to the seven new members of the U.S. Sentencing Commission. The new Commission panel consists of Judge Diana E. Murphy (chair), Judge Ruben Castillo (vice chair); Judge William K. Sessions, III (vice chair), Mr. John R. Steer (vice chair), Judge Sterling Johnson, Jr., Judge Joe Kendall, and Professor Michael E. O'Neill. These seven voting commissioners are joined by *ex-officio* members Mr. Michael E. Horowitz and Mr. Edward F. Reilly, Jr.
- The newly appointed commissioners announced in March the selection of Timothy B. McGrath as staff director following a national search and series of interviews. Prior to his appointment by a unanimous vote of the commissioners, Mr. McGrath had served as the Commission's interim staff director.
- The Commission on May 1, 2000, sent to Congress a number of amendments to the federal sentencing guidelines. Many of the newly enacted guideline provisions are in response to congressional concerns and address such serious crimes as the improper use of new technology in copyright and trademark violations, sexual offenses against children, methamphetamine trafficking, identity theft, cell phone cloning, telemarketing fraud, and firearms offenses.
- Co-sponsored by the U.S. Sentencing Commission and the Federal Bar Association, the Ninth Annual National Seminar on the Federal Sentencing Guidelines was held May 3-5 in Clearwater Beach, Florida. Presentations were made on a variety of topics including the fraud and theft guidelines, restitution, drug issues, firearms offenses, immigration offenses, criminal history, relevant conduct, and grouping of multiple counts. The seminar was attended by 368 people, primarily U.S. probation officers.
- In May, U.S. Sentencing Commission Vice Chair Steer testified on behalf of the Commission about federal drug policy before the House Governmental Reform Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources. Testimony focused on drug sentencing trends, mandatory minimum drug penalties, and how these statutory penalties interact with the federal sentencing guidelines.
- Commissioners met with the Judicial Conference Committee on Criminal Law in Boston in June to discuss sentencing-related matters and obtain the Committee's input on potential amendments to the guidelines.
- All seven voting members of the Sentencing Commission appeared as a part of an ABA Criminal Justice Section panel on federal sentencing entitled, "U.S. Sentencing Commission: New Commissioners, New Directions, New Challenges." The panel was part of the agenda of the ABA Annual Meeting, held in New York City in July.

- The Commission announced in August its priorities for the amendment cycle ending May 1, 2001. The priorities include work on an economic crimes package; money laundering; counterfeiting; further responses to the Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act of 1998; firearms; nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons; unauthorized compensation and related offenses; offenses implicating the privacy interests of taxpayers; the initiation of a review of the guidelines relating to criminal history; and the initiation of an analysis of the operation of the “safety valve” guidelines.
- In September, the Commission attended the National Sentencing Policy Institute in Phoenix, Arizona. The Commission participated with federal judges, U.S. attorneys, members of the bar, and others in a discussion of guideline issues and related sentencing practices.
- In fiscal year 2000, the Commission received documentation on approximately 60,000 cases sentenced under the guidelines. The Commission coded and assimilated the information from these sentencing into its comprehensive, computerized data collection system.
- The Commission’s training staff continued to provide guideline application and sentencing-related training to judges, probation officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and others. During fiscal year 2000, Commission staff trained approximately 2,200 individuals at 44 training sessions (including ongoing programs sponsored by the Federal Judicial Center and other agencies).
- During the year, the Commission’s “HelpLine” provided guideline application assistance to approximately 200 calls each month. The Commission continues to rely on its popular Internet site (www.ussc.gov) as a means of providing information about the agency and its work. The Commission continues to develop its online collection of guideline training materials.
- During 2000, Commission staff also received and responded to thousands of information requests from Congress, attorneys, government agencies, researchers, inmates and their families, and the public.