



Supreme Court to review cocaine case

Mark Sherman

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court agreed Monday to review whether judges are required to impose dramatically longer sentences for crack cocaine than for cocaine powder, stepping into a long-running dispute with racial overtones.

Most crack cocaine offenders in federal courts are black.

The justices said they would hear the case of Derrick Kimbrough in the fall. Kimbrough, who is black and a veteran of the first war with Iraq in 1991, received a 15-year prison term for dealing both crack and powder cocaine, as well as possessing a firearm, in Norfolk, Va.

That was shorter than the federal sentencing guidelines that called for a range of 19 to 22 years in prison.

At Kimbrough's sentencing hear-

ing, U.S. District Judge Raymond A. Jackson said the higher range was "ridiculous."

"This case is another example of how the crack cocaine guidelines are driving the offense level to a point higher than is necessary to do justice in this case," Jackson said.

The judge said the 15-year sentence "is clearly long enough under the circumstances. As a matter of fact, it's the court's view that it's too long, but the court is bound by the mandatory minimums of 10 years on three of these counts."

The government appealed the sentence. The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond said judges are not free to impose sentences shorter than the guidelines "based on a disagreement with the sentencing disparity for crack and powder cocaine offenses."

Crack, continued to page 10



Gov. Deval Patrick (center) waves to the crowd during the 37th annual Gay Pride Parade on Saturday, June 9, 2007. Patrick became the first sitting governor to march in the city's gay pride parade, as state lawmakers prepare to vote on a ballot question that could ban gay marriage. In 2003,

the Supreme Judicial Court barred the state from denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Last year, however, the court ruled that lawmakers must vote on the proposed ballot question, instead of letting it die without a vote, as some lawmakers advocated. (Lolita Parker Jr. photo)

Kennedy introduces Senate bill to reduce health disparities

Banner Staff

Sens. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., and Thad Cochran, R-Miss., introduced legislation to the Senate last Thursday that would authorize roughly \$500 million to improve the health of populations suffering from disparities in health care.

"Your health should not depend on the color of your skin, the size of your bank account or where you live. It is time to stop talking about health disparities and take action to eliminate them," said Kennedy. "All Americans,

including people of color, deserve an opportunity for a healthy life."

Racial and ethnic minorities make up approximately one-third of the U.S. population, but comprise 52 percent of the uninsured and statistically suffer a greater burden of illness and death than their white counterparts.

"Congress must work to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to receive quality healthcare," said Cochran, who said the proposed legislation would "provide the education, training, research opportunities and collaborative tools necessary to

provide optimal care for all of our citizens."

The legislation, titled the Minority Health Improvement and Health Disparity Elimination Act, proposes a comprehensive approach to addressing health disparities by providing grants to communities to increase public awareness about access to health care and disease prevention. The bill would also reauthorize the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and strengthen the center's role in

coordinating and planning relevant research.

Kennedy was the lead sponsor of the Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act of 2000, which created the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities.

The bill would help achieve the goal of increasing cultural competency among health care providers — which Kennedy called "essential for a healthy America" — by focusing on the development of competency curricula for health professions schools and continuing education programs.

It addresses another primary focus, creating a more diverse health care workforce, by planning to establish scholarship grants for minorities making a mid-career change to a health profession and reauthorizing

programs that help schools recruit and retain minority students as well as students from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the Title VII health workforce diversity, Centers of Excellence and Health Careers Opportunity programs.

Other elements of the proposed legislation include reforms designed to strengthen the Office of Minority Health, mandated uniform data collection standards for federal health programs and the creation of an advisory committee at the Food and Drug Administration to address issues related to racial and ethnic minorities.

The bill's co-sponsors include presidential front-runners Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, as well as Senate Assistant Majority Leader Dick Durbin of Illinois, New Mexico's Jeff Bingaman and Sherrod Brown of Ohio.



Charles Stith (left) sits at a recent meeting with former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Stith, who at the age of 30 was the youngest head minister in the history of the Union United Methodist Church in Boston and twice served as the

U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tanzania from 1998-2001, founded the African Presidential Archives and Research Center (APARC) at Boston University, where he is also a professor of international relations. (Photo courtesy of APARC)

Former ambassador sees hope for Africa

David Cogger

On Aug. 7, 1998, members of al-Qaida detonated two car bombs, one each outside American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The explosions killed 12 people and injured 85 others.

At the time of those terrorist attacks, Charles Stith was awaiting confirmation as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Tanzania. President Bill Clinton had nominated Stith, and like most things in Washington, D.C., political gamesmanship was slowing up the process.

According to Stith, then-Sen. Jesse Helms, a conservative Republican from North Carolina and head of the Senate Armed Services Committee, had been stonewalling his confirmation.

"He was just jerking everybody around," Stith said.

But Helms' antics delayed Stith's move to Tanzania by at least one month. Had the confirmation gone without a hitch, Stith easily could have been sitting at the ambassador's desk in Dar es Salaam. As it was, he started on Sept. 11, 1998.

Some might say serendipity played a role in keeping Stith out of Dar es Salaam on that day. But Stith would disagree — he is a man of faith.

At age 30, he became the youngest head minister in the history of the Union United Methodist Church in Boston. And he believes his appointment to Tanzania and subsequent near miss with the al-Qaida-led bombing plot was providential.

"Because of the bombing," Stith *Stith, continued to page 25*

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