



Fraternal Order of Police **FLORIDA STATE LODGE**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: February 12, 2008

TO: Florida Media

FROM: James W. Preston, President
Florida State Lodge
Fraternal Order of Police

RE: FOP Urges Congress to Reverse Ruling on Crack Dealers

FOP Urges Congress to Reverse Ruling on Crack Dealers *Communities Endangered by Retroactive Application of New Rules*

The members of the Florida State Lodge join with Chuck Canterbury, National President of the Fraternal Order of Police, in calling on Congress to act swiftly to block the decision of the U.S. Sentencing Commission to apply retroactively the new, lower sentencing guidelines for individuals convicted of crack cocaine offenses.

“At least 19,500 crack dealers will have their sentences reduced,” Canterbury said. “And these are not ‘low level dealers’ or first time offenders--80% of them had previously been convicted of a crime, a majority of them have multiple prior convictions and 35% of them also possessed a firearm in connection with their drug dealing operation. At a time when law enforcement is seeing an increase in crime rates that have fallen for more than a decade, it seems at variance with common sense and good public policy to release *en masse* crack dealers and drug offenders into our neighborhoods.”

Last year, the U.S. Sentencing Commission changed the sentencing guidelines significantly lowering the penalties for crack cocaine offenses and a few months ago, the Commission voted to apply the new guidelines **retroactively**, which would allow thousands of drug dealers to leave prison and return to the streets. The FOP was the only law enforcement organization to be invited to testify at hearings held by the Commission on this issue.

“This should not be—cannot be—an abstract discussion of policy. This decision will have real consequences for our communities in every region of the country because the dealers will be back, they’ll be back earlier than they thought, and they’ll know that even the Federal government is no longer serious about keeping drug offenders off the streets,” Canterbury said.

“This has all the makings of a public safety nightmare,” Canterbury said. “Congress needs to act soon—before these dealers get dumped back into our communities.”

Florida will be impacted by the early release of dangerous drug dealers back into our communities. The revolving door, catch and release program becomes a minor inconvenience to the criminals rather than the deterrence that our citizens deserve for the safety of their families. Putting drug dealers back on street corners and in front of our schools is a policy the FOP is strongly opposed to.

The Fraternal Order of Police has over 325,000 members nationwide with over 2100 local lodges. The Florida State Lodge Fraternal Order of Police represents over 20,000 active and retired law enforcement officers across the State of Florida.

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