

Statement by Press Secretary Robert Gibbs
March 11, 2010

“In a unanimous vote, the Senate Judiciary Committee took an important and historic step today by advancing a bill that will greatly reduce the disparity in sentences between crack and powder cocaine offenses. While the President believes this disparity should be eliminated completely, he would like to thank Senator Durbin for introducing this important bill, as well as Chairman Leahy and Senators Graham, Coburn, Sessions and Hatch for their leadership on this issue.”

“Under current law, it takes 100 times more powder cocaine than crack cocaine to trigger the same mandatory minimum sentences – a policy that does not serve the goals of law enforcement. This bill will lower the sentencing disparity to 18 to 1 and it will reform policies that experts have long argued undermines trust in the criminal justice system and diverts resources away from the prosecution of large scale drug traffickers.”

Note on background: the National District Attorneys Association, the National Association of Police Organizations and the International Union of Police Associations supported this important legislation.