

OPINION

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A Promise Not Kept Quality education left behind

BY U.S. REP. NANCY PELOSI

Four years ago Democrats and Republicans joined together to make a promise to our nation's children: that we leave no child behind in our educational system.

The No Child Left Behind law was a promise to improve student performance, increase school accountability and provide students with the resources they need to learn the skills crucial to their future success.

Unfortunately, President Bush and Republicans in Congress have failed to live up to their part of the bargain. Over the last four years, they have short-changed No Child Left Behind by \$40 billion, leaving states with new mandates, but not enough funding and leaving children without the necessary resources.

Failing to provide a quality education undermines our responsibility to protect our values of fairness and opportunity for all.

Underfunding No Child Left Behind is one in a long line of Republican attacks on our country's education system. Proposed Republican budget cuts reduce opportunities for young people by cutting funding for student aid by more than \$12 billion and heaping more debt on students. And for the fourth year in a row, Republicans have refused to increase Pell Grants, pricing hard-working students out of a college education.

Sadly, Republican policies continue to leave millions of our children behind. Together, America can do better for our children and for their future.

Nancy Pelosi serves as House Democratic Leader.



Progress on Mandatory Sentences

Treatment better plan for drug offenders

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

There has been much debate over the disparity in sentencing for crack cocaine and powder cocaine

possession; under federal sentencing guidelines, a person arrested with five grams of crack would be sentenced to five years in prison; a person would have to be caught with 100 times more powder cocaine to receive the same sentence.

Last year, the Supreme Court ruled that federal sentencing guidelines would no longer be mandatory, only advisory. This decision

was an important first step in eliminating the racial disparity in drug sentences.

A study released by the Sentencing Project, a Washington, DC, criminal-justice advocacy group, shows judges are sentencing defendants to less time than they would have received under the federal guidelines.

While the sentences being

handed down are still long—judges are still bound by mandatory minimum laws—the study, which examined 24 cases in which the judges explained their sentencing decision, shows crack offenders are being given much less time than they would have in the past.

At the height of the 'war on drugs' mandatory sentencing laws were put in place to punish drug dealers. The penalty for crack was set higher because they believed crack was a more dangerous drug,

because of its much lower street price, crack is associated with poor, minority and urban users, while powder cocaine tends to be favored by more affluent users. Over 80-percent of those convicted on crack cocaine charges are black. Interestingly, there is data that indicates that whites make up the majority of crack users in this country, but are less than six percent of those convicted.

Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, the average sentence for crack

drug dealer boyfriend, a woman would receive the same, stiff sentence she would if she were actually selling the drug. It wouldn't matter if she was forced to do it—judges weren't able to use their own discretion in handing down the sentence. As a result, the number of black women in prison has skyrocketed over the last 10 years.

The Supreme Court's decision has finally put some of the sentencing power back into the judge's hands. Doing away with mandatory mini-

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associated with more violent behavior, than powdered cocaine.

In 1988, Congress made possession of crack punishable by a five-year sentence; it is the only drug to carry a federally mandated sentence for possession, guaranteeing that users, and dealers, would do time.

Research shows that there is no real difference in the potential dangers of crack or powdered cocaine.

There is, however, a difference in the type of user that favors the two

possession was greater than the average sentence for robbery, sexual abuse and manslaughter. These nonviolent drug offenders would have been better served by a drug treatment facility but were, instead, sentenced to long sentences—overcrowding prisons and running up a prison expense tab that is now in the billions.

Black women were especially vulnerable under the guidelines. If caught acting as a courier for her

minimum laws is the next step towards eliminating sentencing disparities. With the power to hand down sentences based on past criminal history and other factors, judges can do a lot in the way of rehabilitating offenders, easing prison overcrowding and restoring communities.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Need A Reason To Vote Republican

GOP's neglect of the black electorate

BY MARC H. MORIAL

For nearly 25 years, the glib conventional wisdom was that the Republican Party was poised to capture a significant percentage of African-American voters.

Unfortunately, it's never been backed up with actual accomplishment.

One measure of the GOP's neglect of the black electorate is that from President Reagan's victory to today, there's never been more than one black GOP representative in Congress. There haven't been any since 2002. In contrast, there are 44 black Democratic members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

President George W. Bush's 2 percent increase-to 11 percent-in

black votes in 2004 from 2000 was confidently declared by some pundits to be the start of something big.

Now, such predictions have been very quietly packed away, in large measure because in the slow governmental response to the terrible toll of Hurricane Katrina, African Americans were among the most deeply victimized.

This pushed blacks' distrust of the GOP and President Bush down to never-before-seen levels.

One may say the silver lining of that bad news is that the GOP has no place to go but up. But even that old saw has been called into question by two articles in the "Washington Post" that raised the question of whether administration political appointees in the Department of Justice were trying to purge its famed Civil Rights Division of career

attorneys who don't meet a conservative "litmus test."

The newspaper later reported that high-ranking officials in the department overruled a team of veteran attorneys and analysts to reject the controversial Georgia state voter identification law. That law seemed to discriminate against black voters.

What can the Republican Party do to regain black votes? We ask the question not for the sake of the GOP, but for the sake of black America, and the larger American society.

The GOP should try to be like Mike. Michael Bloomberg, that is—the newly re-elected Mayor of New York City.

That's the key. Black voters support political candidates for the very same reason other voters do: because they believe the candidate has their interests in mind.

Is anyone in the national Grand Old Party listening?

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League



Kiewit BILFINGER BERGER

EAST SIDE CSO PROJECT

City of Portland

Bureau of Environmental Services

Subcontractor, Supplier, and Service Provider Meeting

January 25, 2006
5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

OAME

4134 N. Vancouver
Portland, OR 97217

Interested Firms are invited and encouraged to attend this introductory meeting to discuss upcoming bid opportunities on the East Side CSO Tunnel Project.

Representatives of Kiewit - Bilfinger Berger and Group AGB will be present to discuss the Project's Subcontracting Plan and KBB's commitment to maximizing the use of M/W/ESB and local firms.

For questions regarding this meeting contact Anthony Lincoln at (503) 736-2564.