

have been throwing the book at people, whom the prosecutors bring to them, became so turned off at the inequity that they saw, and it was not touching, by the way, Senator Pedersen, the drug traffic at all. It is increasing, all studies, all statistics demonstrate that, they couldn't take it anymore, and they are the ones who went to the Sentencing Guideline Commission and said you've got to change this. They felt that they were participating in something that went against all that they supposedly believed in and stood for. Now here we are in the Legislature, we don't have to go to a sentencing commission and appeal to them. We don't have to worry about Congress overturning that which we think is appropriate. We can use our good judgment, and our best instincts, and make this law equitable. Since it is now before us and we are going to deal with it, we should. I did raise this issue during the hearing. I raised a number of other issues with the Governor while he was testifying. So this is not a new issue for the Legislature and, Senator Abboud, I brought it up last time we had the crime bill before us, and I've talked about it repeatedly, so it is not as though we're bringing some new, exotic thing that nobody would understand. We're not, remember,...

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: One minute.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...decriminalizing anything. We're not legalizing anything that was illegal. Powder cocaine remains illegal. Crack remains illegal. What we are going to do is bring the sentencing for these drugs into sync, and I think when we do that, we should do it by lowering the punishment that we've put in place for crack, since it is recognized everywhere as being out of line. It is out of line because it is too high. At the federal level, the judges are not saying increase the punishment for powder. The Federal Sentencing Guideline Commission is not saying increase powder. It is saying reduce crack because that punishment was based on a fallacious presumption, and since it was put in place for the wrong person...purpose and without justification, we should correct it and put things back the way they ought to be. So...

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Time.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...my amendment is designed to do that.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Senator Chambers. Senator Will. Senator Will yields to Senator Chambers.