

MBA NEWS



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MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF DRUG POLICY TASK FORCE

BOSTON, Mass. — Massachusetts Bar Association President David W. White Jr. announced the formation of a Drug Policy Task Force during a Sentencing Symposium hosted by the MBA at the Statehouse yesterday. The task force will examine current policy and consider reforms.

“We look to build a coalition from a broad spectrum of the Massachusetts health care, business and law enforcement communities. The coalition will take a hard look at the difficult questions of drug addiction and punishment of drug-related crimes,” said White, who offered welcoming remarks at the symposium. “This is one part of our effort to improve sentencing in Massachusetts. Reforms of the current sentencing system will reduce crime, rebuild families and communities and save money. We need to begin to treat people with these problems instead of treating them as criminals.”

White’s announcement came at the end of the two-hour symposium in the Statehouse Great Hall, where key leaders suggested the state could see meaningful sentencing reform for the first time in years. Two panels of legislators, advocates and attorneys discussed the political, financial and ethical issues surrounding the state’s sentencing structure and Criminal Offender Record Information system. “I’m more optimistic than ever that we can have a useful discussion,” said panelist Sen. Robert S. Creedon Jr., Senate chairman of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary.

Several panelists, including Suffolk County Sheriff Andrea Cabral, said mandatory minimum sentences can make it difficult to treat inmates with drug addictions and to offer rehabilitation and training programs. “The sheriffs, we are on the forefront of re-entry programs, but we are stymied by mandatory minimums that don’t allow us to classify people for acceptance into some of our programs,” she said.

The other panelists were:

- James Alan Fox, Ph.D., The Lipman Family Professor of Criminal Justice, Northeastern University, Boston
- State Rep. Roger Goodman, Vice Chair, House Judiciary Committee, Washington
- Mary Elizabeth Heffernan, Esq., Undersecretary of Criminal Justice, Executive Office of Public Safety
- John J. Larivee, Chief Executive Officer, Community Resources for Justice, Boston
- William J. Leahy, Esq., Chief Counsel, Committee for Public Counsel Service, Boston
- Hon. Robert A. Mulligan, Chief Justice for Administration and Management
- State Rep. Eugene L. O’Flaherty, House Chairman, Joint Committee on the Judiciary
- Mary Price, Esq., Vice President and General Counsel, Families Against Mandatory Minimums, Washington, D.C.

Following the symposium, White testified before the Joint Committee on the Judiciary about the MBA’s objection to reinstating the death penalty in Massachusetts.

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.