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EDITORS' NOTES

This is the second time in three years that the *Federal Sentencing Reporter* has focused its attention on California sentencing and corrections. In 2010, *FSR* explored the state's highly dysfunctional criminal justice system, noting that "wide-ranging reform will be necessary if California is to create a criminal justice system worthy of its name." Since then the picture in California has changed dramatically. Wide-ranging reform has, indeed, come to the state, if not entirely voluntarily. Ordered by federal courts to reduce its prison population, the state has adopted a Realignment policy designed to cut its prison population by roughly a quarter, even while attempting to preserve and promote public safety.

California's reforms have national significance. Just as it has been a trendsetter in the cultural and economic life of the nation, California has also been a leader in criminal justice policy for many decades. The state's adoption of the Determinate Sentencing Law of 1976 was one of the first signs of the emerging movement toward mass incarceration in the United States. Its passage of the Three Strikes initiative in 1994 demonstrated that the nation's punitive trend had many more years to run, despite falling crime rates.

In this light, the changes now occurring in California's criminal justice system warrant close attention. Its Realignment policy raises a critical question that lies at the heart of reform efforts nationwide: In this age of mass incarceration, is it possible to reduce the prison population without risking public safety? How, if at all, can such an ambitious goal be achieved? If California is able to identify a way forward, its Realignment experiment may resonate far beyond its own borders.

To explore the complex changes occurring in California's criminal justice system today, *FSR* has brought together an exceptional group of contributors, including many of the leading figures in the state's criminal justice system. The authors' perspectives are wide ranging; the contributors include members of the prosecution, defense, sheriff's office, probation department, and the academy. The result is a rich resource for anyone trying to understand what is happening in California corrections today, and where those policies may lead in the future. We hope you enjoy the read.



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Federal Sentencing Reporter Directory

Volume 17 (October 2004–June 2005)

- No. 1 *Considering the Post-Blakely World*
- No. 2 *Further Implications of Blakely*
- No. 3 *Criminal History*
- No. 4 *The Booker Aftershock*
- No. 5 *Is a Booker Fix Needed?*

Volume 18 (October 2005–June 2006)

- No. 1 *The State of Blakely in the States*
- No. 2 *Defense Perspectives on the Post-Booker World*
- No. 3 *Taking Stock a Year After Booker*
- No. 4 *Sentencing at the Supreme Court*
- No. 5 *Toward Real Reform: The Constitution Project Recommendations; Model Federal Sentencing Guidelines*

Volume 19 (October 2006–June 2007)

- No. 1 *Victims and Sentencing I: Victim Impact Evidence, the Crime Victims' Rights Act and Kenna*
- No. 2 *Victims and Sentencing II: Beyond the CVRA*
- No. 3 *Claiborne & Rita: Reasonableness Review in the Supreme Court*
- No. 4 *Information-based Sentencing Analysis*
- No. 5 *Assessing Crack-Cocaine and Mandatory Minimum Sentencing Provisions*

Volume 20 (October 2007–June 2008)

- No. 1 *Learning from Libby*
- No. 2 *Prisoner Reentry*
- No. 3 *White-Collar Sentencing*
- No. 4 *Debates and Realities Surrounding Crack Retroactivity*
- No. 5 *American Criminal Justice Policy in a "Change" Election*

Volume 21 (October 2008–June 2009)

- No. 1 *Thoughts for the U.S. Sentencing Commission*
- No. 2 *Sex Offenders: Recent Developments in Punishment and Management*
- No. 3 *ABA Roundtable on "Second Look" Sentencing Reforms*
- No. 4 *On the Shoulders of Giants*
- No. 5 *"Fast-Track" Sentencing*

Volume 22 (October 2009–June 2010)

- No. 1 *Decreasing Incarceration in the Federal System*
- No. 2 *Booker at Five*
- No. 3 *State of Emergency: The California Correctional Crisis*
- No. 4 *Common Problems and Different Solutions*
- No. 5 *Judicial Discretion: A Look Forward and a Look Back Five Years After Booker*

Volume 23 (October 2010–June 2011)

- No. 1 *Life Without Parole*
- No. 2 *Criminal Justice Policy Two Years After the Change Election*
- No. 3 *The Fair Sentencing Act and Its Legal Aftermath*
- No. 4 *Advice for the U.S. Sentencing Commissioners*
- No. 5 *Sentencing and Social Science*

Volume 24 (October 2011–June 2012)

- No. 1 *Sentencing Within Sentencing*
- No. 2 *Federal Child Pornography Sentencing*
- No. 3 *Considering Costs and Other Data*
- No. 4 *Prisoner Rights and Habeas Corpus: Assessing the Impact of the 1996 Reforms*
- No. 5 *The Post-Booker Advisory Guidelines: Problem or Solution?*