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Bartlett Introduces Bill to Eliminate Disparity in Cocaine Sentencing And Strengthen America's Effort in the War on Drugs

Washington, D.C. -- Congressman Roscoe G. Bartlett (R-6-MD) has introduced legislation that would **ELIMINATE** the disparity between powder cocaine and crack cocaine in Federal Law. The bill H.R. 4026, the Powder-Crack Cocaine Penalty Equalization Act of 2002, would end what is known as the 100 to 1 ratio under which it takes only five grams of crack, but 500 grams of powder cocaine to trigger a mandatory five-year minimum federal prison sentence. "Cocaine is cocaine and it should be punished equally whatever form it is found in. My bill would eliminate the current disparity in federal law and make our streets and neighborhoods safer by targeting federal resources at getting dealers off the street and behind bars," said Congressman Bartlett.

United States Sentencing Commission data indicates that some distributors and higher level dealers sell cocaine exclusively in its powder form. These drug dealers refuse to handle crack because of the lower threshold quantity levels that trigger Federal minimum prison penalties. Street level cocaine dealers tend to receive their cocaine in powder form. Street dealers easily convert powder cocaine into crack cocaine by heating it with baking soda and water in a microwave oven. As a result, it is the low level crack vendors and users that are arrested and put behind bars - not the upper level powder cocaine distributors and dealers. By making the threshold level required to trigger mandatory minimum federal prison sentences the same for cocaine powder as it is for crack, passage of the Bartlett bill would put more powder cocaine distributors behind bars and help keep crack off of our streets.

"It is ridiculously simple to convert powder cocaine into crack. That's why it is ridiculous to punish possession of powder cocaine at a different threshold level than cocaine in its rock form," said Congressman Bartlett. "The 100 to 1 ratio under current federal law has had the perverse effect of targeting addicts and street level dealers for stiff prison sentences while letting major cocaine dealers, middlemen and kingpins avoid them. My bill will give federal law enforcement officers and prosecutors more ammunition and leverage to get and keep the most dangerous cocaine dealers off our streets and out of our neighborhoods."

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