

This is a printer friendly version of an article from the **The Greenville News**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Inglis uses ballplayer's case to make pitch for fair drug sentencing
Lawmaker says disparities in jail time for cocaine need to be fixed

Published: Sunday, October 22, 2006 - 2:00 am

By Ellyn Ferguson
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON -- Rep. Bob Inglis and Willie Mays Aikens, a Seneca native who was a standout in the 1980 World Series, have never met, but Inglis believes Aikens' slide into drug addiction and a 20-year sentence for crack cocaine distribution highlights disparities in jail sentencing that should be changed.

Inglis, R-Travelers Rest, gets a chance today to talk about flaws in federal mandatory prison terms when ESPN airs a story on Aikens, who turned 50 on Tuesday. The earliest the former South Carolina State player could be released is 2012.

Supporters of Aikens say federal laws that mandate more prison time for crack cocaine-related offenses than for powdered cocaine result in more time served, particularly for black drug offenders who are more likely to use crack cocaine.

"Crack became topical (in the news), and Congress came in with mandatory minimums for crack, and the effect is a discrepancy in sentencing for crack cocaine and powdered cocaine," Inglis said. "Mandatory minimums are based on headlines."


Advertisement

"Willie Mays Aikens is a classic example. He would be out (by now) if he had been caught with powdered cocaine," Inglis said.

As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, Inglis has argued against "Congress parachuting in with mandatory minimums."

"My goal is to look at further opportunities to revisit mandatory minimums," he said. "We need to punish crime strictly, but we also need to do it fairly. "

ESPN first broadcast a story on Aikens in 2003. Producer Willie Weinbaum said he decided to revisit Aikens' case this year because the former ballplayer has filed a petition for a presidential pardon. He was sentenced in 1994.

STORYCHAT 
What's your view?
[Click here](#) to add
your comment to
this story.