

**REPORT OF THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE**  
**ON THE USE OF ENHANCEMENT FACTORS**  
**IN CRIMINAL SENTENCING**

By Public Chapter 591 of the Public Acts of 1989, the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee adopted the Criminal Sentencing Reform Act of 1989 (hereinafter "Act"). In this Act, the General Assembly sought to achieve uniformity, consistency and predictability in criminal sentencing. (See, T.C.A. § 40-35-102 and 103) This Act has stood the test of time and remains the law governing the sentencing of persons convicted of crimes in the State of Tennessee.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2004, the United States Supreme Court announced its opinion in *Blakely v. Washington*, 124 S.Ct. 2531 (2004). Though some significant differences exist between the Tennessee statute and the Washington statute which was before the Court, the essential element of a presumptive sentence in the Act is undoubtedly unconstitutional and a violation of a citizen's right to a jury trial on an issue of fact which would enhance or increase a person's punishment.

Because of the immediate and substantial impact of *Blakely* on the administration of criminal justice in the State of Tennessee, Governor Phil Bredesen appointed a Task Force for the purpose of immediately studying the implications of *Blakely v. Washington* and recommending changes to our sentencing laws to remove the constitutional infirmities of the statute. (The Governor's Press Release and the Executive Order are attached as Appendix 1 to this report)

The Governor appointed the Honorable Barbara Haynes, Circuit Court Judge of the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, Davidson County, Tennessee, to Chair the Task Force. Judge Haynes had served as Chair of the Tennessee Sentencing Commission which recommended the 1989 Act. The Task Force members are:

Judge Barbara N. Haynes, 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Circuit Court  
Judge William B. Acree, Jr., 27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Circuit Court  
Joseph N. Barker, Attorney at Law, Davidson County  
Senator Steve I. Cohen, Lt. Gov. Wilder's Designee  
Representative Joe F. Fowlkes, Speaker Naifeh's Designee  
Claudia S. Jack, District Public Defender, 22<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District  
Victor ("Torry") S. Johnson, III, District Attorney General, 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District  
James F. Logan, Jr., Attorney at Law, Bradley County  
Judge Loyce Lambert Ryan, 30<sup>th</sup> Judicial District General Sessions Court  
Gordon W. Smith, Attorney General and Reporter's Designee  
Chairman Charles Traughber, Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole

Judge Gary R. Wade, Court of Criminal Appeals, Eastern Section  
Commissioner Quenton I. White, Tennessee Department of Correction

Ex-Officio Appointees of the Chair:

Sue Cain, Deputy Director of Metro Nashville Law Department  
Professor Neil Cohen, University of Tennessee, College of Law  
Professor Donald J. Hall, Vanderbilt University School of Law  
Professor Nancy King, Vanderbilt University School of Law  
David Raybin, Attorney at Law, Nashville

At its initial meeting, the Task Force heard testimony of various individuals who had been designated by the Chair to serve in an advisory capacity to the Task Force. The responses of Tennessee courts to the Blakely opinion had been varied. Some courts were only imposing the minimum sentence, except in those instances in which the defendant had a prior criminal record or the defendant had admitted the existence of other enhancement factors. Some courts were empanelling jurors to determine the existence of enhancement factors beyond a reasonable doubt. Other courts were not because there is no authority for such procedure under the current statutes.

By unanimous vote, the Task Force decided that the issue confronting the State of Tennessee was of such complexity and uncertainty that any immediate response was ill-advised. The Task Force also determined that a crisis was not present because criminal defendants were still being sentenced and the worst of the criminal defendants were still eligible for an increased sentence. Thus, the Task Force unanimously advised the Governor against calling a special session of the General Assembly.

Subcommittees were appointed to analyze various aspects of the Criminal Sentencing Reform Act of 1989 and the implications of the *Blakely* opinion. The Task Force engaged in an exchange of information and posted various proposals on the website of the Administrative Office of the Courts and to the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference, District Public Defenders Conference, the Tennessee Judicial Conference, and the Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

After considering various options, the Task Force developed two distinctly different approaches to amending the Tennessee statutes. The first proposal established a bifurcated procedure for jury trials on factual issues regarding enhancement factors. The second proposal eliminated presumptive sentences and provided that the presence of enhancement factors and mitigating factors would be

advisory only. The impact of each alternative on the administration of justice was unknown.

Concerns were expressed that the first proposal would increase service time of jurors, increase jury trial time on the court docket, impose increased burdens on public defenders and district attorneys, and otherwise increase the costs of the administration of justice. The second proposal caused many concerns regarding the potential for reducing the consistency, uniformity and predictability of sentencing in Tennessee and potentially resulting in significant increased cost resulting from increased sentences. In view of these concerns, the Task Force chose to await the United States Supreme Court decisions in *United States v. Booker* and *United States v. Fanfan* before making its final recommendation to the Governor. *Booker* and *Fanfan* were decided by the United States Supreme Court on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2005.

The decisions in *Booker* and *Fanfan* allowed the Task Force to develop a compromise proposal which is calculated at maintaining the uniformity, consistency and predictability of sentencing in Tennessee without incurring the additional cost and burdens of either of the initial alternatives. The Task Force is pleased to recommend to the Governor for presentation to the General Assembly, the Criminal Sentencing Reform Act of 2005, which is attached as Appendix 2.

This proposed Act eliminates presumptive sentencing from Tennessee sentencing law so as to comply with the United States Supreme Court decisions. The former presumptive sentence provisions are replaced with a series of guidelines that include enhancement and mitigating factors and a statement of principles and sentencing considerations. The proposed Act requires the judge to consider, but not be bound by, these advisory guidelines to arrive at an appropriate sentence which is subject to appellate review.

Although we recommend necessary changes, the essential components of this proposed Act will retain the policies and purposes of the 1989 Act that have served our State well. Defendants who are convicted of crimes in the State of Tennessee will continue to be sentenced within the ranges of punishment established by the General Assembly. Trial judges will continue to set forth their reasons for the sentence which is imposed; however, there will be no presumptive sentence. Because the ranges of punishment are relatively narrow and because the policies and purposes of the statute will serve as a basis for evaluation of the sentence actually imposed, it is believed that the proposed Criminal Sentencing Reform Act of 2005 will achieve its purpose without substantial adverse impact on the criminal justice system of the State of Tennessee.

Minutes of the Meetings of the Task Force are attached as Appendix 3.

The Task Force wishes to express its gratitude to the following:  
Connie Clark, Director, Administrative Office of the Courts  
Robert Cooper, Counsel to the Governor  
Professor Neil Cohen, University of Tennessee College of Law  
Professor Donald J. Hall, Vanderbilt University School of Law  
Professor Nancy King, Vanderbilt University School of Law  
John Oliva, Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers  
David Raybin, Attorney at Law, Nashville  
Libby Sykes, Deputy Director, Administrative Office of the Courts  
Tom Tigue, Office of Legal Services for the General Assembly  
District Public Defenders Conference  
Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference  
Tennessee Judicial Conference

Respectfully submitted this the 17<sup>th</sup> day of February 2005.

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Barbara N. Haynes, Chair