

## News Roundup

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While the General Assembly has closed up shop, Congress is going strong, and a bipartisan group of Senators has introduced the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015, which would reform federal mandatory minimums in drug cases, expand the “safety valve,” and require a complete inventory of all federal criminal offenses. The last item especially intrigues me, because several efforts at listing all federal crimes have failed in the recent past. Doug Berman summarizes the legislation [here](#), and a critical reaction to it is [here](#).

In other news:

**FCC to take action on cost of inmates’ phone calls.** The *New York Times* reports [here](#) that the FCC is considering implementing rules that “would impose a rate of 11 cents a minute on state or federal prison calls and cap the cost of calls made from local jails at 14 to 22 cents a minute, based on the size of the jail.” The rules would also limit the charges for collect calls, and it sounds as though they may also limit various “connection” and “service” fees. The story notes that current rates can be much higher and that both the service providers and the correctional facilities are generating substantial revenue from telephone services.

**Prosecutors considering case against Bill Cosby.** The water keeps getting hotter for the former Cliff Huxtable, who has been accused of drugging and sexually assaulting dozens of women. He is already facing at least one civil suit, and now [WRAL reports](#) that “Los Angeles prosecutors are reviewing an investigation into a model’s accusations that . . . Cosby sexually abused her [in 2008] at the Playboy Mansion.”

**Depressing new BJS recidivism report.** The Bureau of Justice Statistics recently issued [this report](#), which among other findings notes that 43% of inmates released from prison are re-arrested within a year and 77% are re-arrested within five years.

**Legal writing issue of the week.** Regular readers know that I enjoy thinking about legal writing. [This item](#) at the Volokh Conspiracy touches on an issue that I have struggled with: When describing parties, witnesses, or other people involved in a case, it is appropriate to use last names only (“Smith approached Jones in a dark alley, threatened her with a gun, and stole her purse”), or should each name be prefaced with Mr., Ms., or another appropriate title (“Mr. Smith approached Dr. Jones in a dark alley, threatened her with a gun, and stole her purse”)? I’d be interested to hear from those of you that have wrestled with this issue.