

Dear (fill in Member of Congress)

I am writing you as (list position ie State Crime Lab Director, ME etc) to urgently request assistance for the state and local forensic service provider community. Specifically, we are asking you to please contact the CJS Appropriations Committee and support funding for the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grant at the full \$25 million that the program is authorized for in the Justice for All Bill, and to contact the Judiciary Committee and request support for the Justice For All Act which re-authorizes the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Act.

Here at (YOUR CRIME LAB/ME), (PROVIDE INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO YOU ON HOW COVERDELL HELPED AND WHY YOU NEED IT).

The Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science grants are the only funds in the nation that provide the state and local forensic community a source of funding for over 90% of the disciplines within the crime lab community. They are also the only funds available for the medical examiner/coroner community. The amount of physical evidence submitted to the nation's crime labs is increasing at an exponential rate, especially in the controlled substances, digital evidence, and toxicology disciplines. Because we lack the capacity to process the amount of evidence we are currently being presented with, we struggle to maintain turnaround times acceptable to law enforcement and officers of the court. Loss of Coverdell grant funding would set our country's crime labs and medical examiners offices back even further thereby affecting our court systems and the administration of justice.

Coverdell funding can also be used to support accreditation efforts by laboratories. We support universal accreditation of forensic science service providers, and this comes at a cost. The Coverdell grant program is an excellent way for laboratories, medical examiners, coroners, and other forensic service providers to prepare for and maintain accreditation requirements. On December 7, 2015 Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates announced that the Justice Department will, within the next five years, require DOJ-run forensic labs to obtain and maintain accreditation and require all department prosecutors to use accredited labs to process forensic evidence when practicable. Without the continued support of Coverdell, we believe this directive will intensify the burden on an under resourced system resulting in a profound negative effect for all stakeholders.

In addition to backlog reduction efforts, Coverdell funding is used for training in the forensic service practitioner community. In the last few years, budgets have decreased and training funds have been cut. Crime laboratories must have the ability to send employees to training in order to stay current with the latest technology and research. Without this much needed funding, new technology and research will not be disseminated down to the bench level and will not be incorporated into crime labs. Additionally, training hours are a requirement of many existing forensic examiner certification programs. Without supplemental

funding like that provided by the Coverdell program, crime labs will never be able to achieve the goal of initial and continuing certification for all analysts.

Thank you for your consideration and if you have any questions please contact me at ()...

DRAFT