



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
International Association for Identification
International Association of Forensic Nurses
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/ American Board of Forensic Toxicology*

PASSAGE OF THE 2016 SENATE JUSTICE FOR ALL REAUTHORIZATION ACT
LEGISLATIVE ALERT
6/16/2016

Following a two-year effort in the United States Senate, the Justice For All Reauthorization Act (JFAA) of 2016 was unanimously passed in the Senate today. The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations has been in constant dialog with the Senate over this bill for many years and is pleased to announce that the bill includes numerous sections in support of forensic practitioners. This legislation is an authorizing bill, which provides legal power for programs to exist and operate. Funding will still need to be appropriated during the appropriations process, but the levels in our key federal grant programs are raised. The highlights of this legislation specifically for forensic-science (crime laboratories and medical examiners offices) are:

- Re-authorizes the Sexual Assault Kit Backlog programs ensuring that:
 - 75% of funds provided for grants must be used for “direct testing activities”
 - Not less 5% shall be provided for grants for law enforcement agencies to conduct audits of their previously unsubmitted kits
- Provides grant funding for expansion and operation of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner programs in rural areas and to sustain or establish training programs
- Authorizes \$5m for DNA Research and Development for FY2017 to FY2021
- Authorizes \$10m for FBI DNA Programs for FY 2017 to FY2021
- Re-authorizes the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants:
 - Provides funding for accreditation of laboratories and medical examiner offices
 - Increases amount of formula grant to 85% from 75%
 - Decreases discretionary funds from 25% to 15%
 - Increases minimum amount a grantee receives from 0.6% to 1%
 - Adds language for purpose areas to allow funds to be used for impression evidence, digital evidence and medicolegal death investigators
 - Adds language that funds can be used to “address emerging forensic science issues (such as statistics, contextual bias, and uncertainty of measurement) and emerging forensic science technology (such as high throughput automation, statistical software, and new types of instrumentation)”
 - Adds language to allow funds to be used to educate and train forensic pathologists
 - Adds language for DOJ to work with states and local government to direct funding to medicolegal death investigation systems to facilitate accreditation of medical examiner and coroner offices and certification of medicolegal death investigators
 - Increases Coverdell authorization to \$25m for FY 2017 to 2021
 - Mandates a needs assessment of forensic laboratories not later than October 2018 to include:
 - An assessment of current workload, backlog, personnel, equipment
 - A review of all previous studies to include NAS, BJS and others

- Reauthorizes Post Conviction DNA Testing funds
- Reauthorizes Kirk Bloodsworth Post Conviction DNA Program for \$10m
- Establishes best practices for evidence retention and requires that they are published one year after passage of bill in consultation with Federal, state and local law enforcement and laboratories
- Requires audits of recipients of grants

This legislation will now move quickly to the House for a vote, and then to the President for a signature.

CFSO thanks Senators Cornyn and Leahy for their leadership on this bill and Chairman Grassley for his efforts to ensure the passage. We also thank the numerous CFSO members that wrote letters, made phone calls, hosted tours, and visited personally with the Senators and their staff members to ensure that the needs of the forensic science community were addressed in this bill.

Links to the Senator announcements on this action are listed below:

<https://www.cornyn.senate.gov/content/cornyn-leahy-bill-help-reduce-rape-kit-backlog-strengthen-crime-victim-rights-passes-senate>

<https://www.leahy.senate.gov/press/senate-passes-leahy-authored-bill-to-improve-criminal-justice-system>