

ADVOCACY DIRECTIONS

1. Review and edit the letter (or phone call talking points) to provide specific information pertinent to your organization (examples of cases in your organization whereby Coverdell funding could or has helped, your point of contact information, and if you are able offer the Member and staff a tour)
2. Go to the below website and enter in your zip code and ask for the staff person who handles judiciary/forensic/law enforcement issues)
www.contactingthecongress.org/
3. Advise staff of who you are and the position that you hold (JOHN SMITH, TITLE). Ask for them to contact the appropriations committee and request that Coverdell be (if a Member of the House –please ask the House Appropriations Committee to recede to the Senate \$13m in the FY18 budget for Coverdell, if Senate office-please keep the \$13m for Coverdell in the FY18 budget)
4. Follow up with the letter to the Member of Congress. It is important that you **email or fax this letter** as it will not arrive to the Member for a significant period of time if it is mailed through the postal service. Ask staff for email.
5. Continue to follow-up with staff. It will be important to accomplish this quickly. **By September 30.**
6. Report back to your Association POC the results of your conversation.

SAMPLE LETTER

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, county, and local Forensic Science Service Provider (FSSP) community. Specifically, we are asking you to please contact the appropriations Committee and support funding for the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grant as funded by the Senate at \$13 million.

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

The Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science grants are the only funding source 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 majority of the federal grant funds available for the medical examiner/coroner community. You may not be aware, but the amount of physical evidence submitted to the nation's crime labs is increasing exponentially, 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 are struggling to process all of it not only in a timely a manner, but more importantly within the timelines authorized by the court system. Without timely analysis court trials are either continued or in many cases charges must be dismissed. Given our current struggles, the loss of Coverdell grant funding would set our country's crime labs and medical examiners offices back even further thereby creating additional issues in our court systems already plagued with these very issues.

In addition to backlog reduction efforts, Coverdell funding is used for training in the forensic service provider 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, research, and in many instances for laboratory personnel to retain their respective certifications. 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 maintaining certification for all analysts.

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

Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grants Talking Points

ASKS:

Please keep the \$13m as funded by the Senate Appropriations Committee in the FY18 DOJ budget for the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grant.

FACTS:

The FY18 Justice budget included \$10.5 m for the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grant.

The Senate funded the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grant at \$13m for FY18 but the House did not provide any funding.

Coverdell is authorized for \$18.5 m in FY18

Coverdell is the only federal forensic funding available to the forensic service provider community for disciplines other DNA to include controlled substances, toxicology, latent prints, firearms, and trace evidence.

Coverdell is the majority of federal forensic funding available to the nations medical examiners and coroners.

Funding for the forensic service provider community is not based on the needs and requirements of the community.

Issues in the community that can use this funding:

- Large retirements are looming in many forensic disciplines and the only federal funds available for training are Coverdell funds.
- There is a significant increase in the use of synthetic cannabinoids and research chemicals that take much longer to analyze than routine drugs and the backlog is growing.
- There is an influx of Opioid cases coming into the drug chemistry and toxicology labs, and resources are needed to address safety, analysts, and instrumentation.
- States are cutting forensic training budgets as they struggle with larger budget issues.

- **PROVIDE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES TO YOUR STATE**