



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

4/12/2022

## **DOJ REQUEST**

Fully support the President's budget request for the Paul Coverdell Grants, SAKI Grants, DNA Initiative Grants (Debbie Smith, Kirk Bloodsworth, SAFE, State, Local and Federal Forensic Activities), Byrne JAG (NamUs and NIJ's Strengthening the Medical Examiner/Coroner System Grants), and NIJ's Research and Development in Forensic Science Grants.

Include attached language to allow for funding to be used for forensic molecular genealogy testing and data searching in all DNA funding grants.

Fully support funding for the Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Act and the Forensics Ballistics Program in Higher Education.

## **BACKGROUND / STATUS**

Current funding levels for the nation's forensic science providers is woefully inadequate, while national backlogs of examination requests in all disciplines are increasing daily. The number of examination requests have been on the rise almost exponentially over the last several years. These problems are further exacerbated by a shortage of personnel in many disciplines due to a retiring workforce, a lack of robust federal or other workforce development and training programs, and an exponential growth of new forensic science positions due to increased demand for service at state and local entities. Specifically, forensic science laboratories across the country are seeing significant shortages in firearms examiners, DNA analysts, and within the medical examiner community (forensic science medical providers) it has been estimated there is a shortfall of at least 1,100 to 1,200 forensic pathologists to meet the current demands.

## **BACKGROUND**

A recent report from the NIJ initiated FORESIGHT program at West Virginia University School of Business indicates a substantial growth in backlogs among the nation's crime labs. For instance, the average annual growth in backlog in the United States from 2013 to 2020 was 190.3% in blood alcohol, 628.6% in Crime Scene Investigation, 88.5% in fingerprints, 110.3% in toxicology, and 50% in firearms. States recently surveyed by our organization provided data to support increased firearms case submissions up to 154% in the last few years. The Medical Examiner community is also struggling with an astronomical increase in cases due to the opioid crisis and COVID cases. This is not a surprise to the community, and it is consistent with the 2019 National Institute of Justice publication of the Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices Report to Congress. The NIJ Needs Assessment report (based on FORESIGHT data) concluded there is insufficient funding to process the ever-increasing amounts of forensic evidence being submitted to the nation's forensic science service providers. It further states, *"the state, county, local and tribal crime laboratories including medical examiner/coroner offices have a \$640 million deficit for normal operations, but the increase of current opioid expenditures adds another \$270 million to that cost."* The NIJ report goes on to state that there must be not only an increase in funding but improvements in the personnel pipeline, the institutionalization of systems-based communication, and strategic planning to address the matters of funding, current backlogs, ever increasing caseloads, workforce challenges, and continuing education in current and new technologies.

## **POC**

Beth Lavach, 703-622-8752, [bethlavach@elsandassociates.com](mailto:bethlavach@elsandassociates.com)