



*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*

## **CFSO FORENSIC SCIENCE WEEK ADVOCACY PACKAGE**

Dear Forensic Science Professional:

Forensic Science is often viewed by our local, state, and federal policymakers as it appears in many TV shows and in the movies. In those portrayals, the impression is often conveyed that crime scenes can be processed, evidence examined, and suspects identified many times within hours, if not minutes. Often, forensic pathologist can not only determine the cause and manner of death equally as quickly but time of death. Forensic science laboratories and medical examiner offices are also often depicted as having endless amounts of magic technology, and more importantly, the needed resources to assist in their analyses. This, of course, is not true, and our forensic community needs additional resources to acquire even the most basic pieces of equipment. Your respective policymaker, however, may also mistakenly believe from these portrayals and mischaracterizations of the forensic community that you have infinite resources available to your respective offices. Therefore, Forensic Science Week provides you the opportunity to educate them from the forensic science community perspective.

We have compiled for you, a sample packet and how-to guide to use during Forensic Science Week 2022. Included you will find:

- 1) How to contact my Member of Congress or other policy-members and invite them to my office.
- 2) What you should present during their visit.
- 3) Talking points and an outline for a packet they can take away with them.
- 4) Information about links on the [thecfso.org](http://thecfso.org) website for white papers to use if you'd like to provide more detail to your policymakers.

As always if you have any questions please do not hesitate to call or email the CFSO.

Sincerely,  
The CFSO Board

# STEPS TO INVITING YOUR POLICYMAKER TO YOUR LAB OR OFFICE

## WHO DO I INVITE TO MY LAB?

Any policymaker who can influence your budget needs to understand your needs. Therefore, invite you Member of Congress and your US Senator. NOTE: If you invite the actual Member of Congress and his staff is the only person who can attend, that is great as they advise the Member of Congress about what position to take.

## HOW DO I INVITE THEM TO MY LAB?

Most policymakers will want a letter of invitation, and we have included a sample letter for you to use, but always call them first. If you need to find out who your Member of Congress is click on this link and insert your address <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

- Call the Member's office first, their number will be in the above link.
- Ask for the office scheduler.
- Invite the policymaker to tour your office during Forensic Science Week.
- If they can't make it during that week then be open to another day.
- Email the letter of invitation after the call.

## WHAT SHOULD I PRESENT TO THEM

Policymakers want to understand what is going on in their district or state, but they also want to know what they can do to help. Provide them a tour of your lab and explain to them what you do in your lab or office, and how your results provide critical evidence to the legal system. If there is the ability for them to have a hands-on experience, then afford them that opportunity. Let your employees talk to them, and let them address your employees. Leave time to talk to them substantively about your resource issues, and provide them with specific ways they can resolve not only current issues but projected issues due to the ever increasing caseload (see attached documents to provide to the policymaker).

## HOW SHOULD I FOLLOW UP ON THE MEETING

Follow up with a thank you note to the policymaker and reiterate your discussions.

## WHAT CAN THE CFSO DO FOR YOUR AGENCY

We would be happy to assist in drafting an invitation (see attached), providing general talking points, which may be relevant to your laboratory, and assisting in drafting a follow up strategy.

# Sample Meeting Request Letter

Use the sample letter below as a guide for drafting your own meeting request to your Members of Congress. Please remember to **E-MAIL** meeting requests to your Representative and/or Senator's office whenever possible. Call and ask for the contact information of the Member's scheduler. Due to heightened security, it can take up to a month for Members to receive letters sent via mail.

**(DATE)**

[To a Representative]

The Honorable **(full name)** or U.S. House of Representatives **(District Office Address)**

Re: Meeting Request

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[To a Senator]

The Honorable **(full name)** United States Senate **(State/District Office Address)**

Dear **(Representative or Senator) (last name)**:

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On behalf of **(lab/office name)** located in **(name of community)** in your **(state/district)**, I am writing to request the opportunity to meet with you while you are back in **(state/district)** during National Forensic Science Week, September (dates) or at a time convenient to you or your staff.

**(Personalize here:** introduce yourself, your office, and summarize offices in the congressional district or state. **Example:** I am the Crime Lab Director/Medical Examiner of the State of New York, whose office handles approximately # of cases per year. Describe what work your lab does, how many people work for your lab and what types of work are done in your lab/office.)

During our meeting with you, we would like to talk about how we perform the work that **(name of lab/office)** conducts in your community every day, and how these investments benefit our common constituents. We would also like to explain how the federal budget decisions being contemplated in Washington, D.C. affect organizations like **(name of lab/office)**.

I will contact your **(name of community where Member's office is located)** office to confirm receipt of this letter and to speak with your scheduler about a specific meeting date and time. Thank you in advance for the opportunity to meet with you.

Sincerely,

**(your name, office name, mailing address, email, and telephone number)**

## Specific Ask of your Members of Congress

## **Congress needs to pass the Justice for All Act and robustly fund forensic science in the FY23 budget.**

### **BACKGROUND**

Over the past twenty years, forensic science has evolved and continues to do so, becoming increasingly more robust and reliable. The use of forensic science to fight crime and exonerate those who are innocent has expanded tremendously. Forensic science is now routinely used in the courtroom, is expected by jurors, and has become a key part of the criminal justice system. The National Institute of Justice's *Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices* Report to Congress was the first attempt in determining the approximate cost to meet the current demand for services and the related costs of testimony by forensic scientists from public laboratories and medical examiners/coroner offices while ensuring valid and reliable results.

The report concludes there is insufficient funding to process the ever-increasing amounts of forensic evidence in a timely manner. **The report states that the state, county, local and tribal crime laboratories including medical examiner/coroner offices have a \$640 million annual deficit for normal operations, but the increase of current opioid expenditures adds another \$270 million to that cost.**

In 2021 The National Institute of Justice and West Virginia University Project FORESIGHT provided data that there has been an increase in backlogs from 2013 to 2020 in blood alcohol by 190%, crime scene investigation by 628.5%, fingerprints by 88.5%, toxicology by 110%, and firearms cases increased by as much as 166%. However, funding has not increased to address these matters.

### **ACTION NEEDED BY CONGRESS**

**Pass the Justice for All Act which re-authorizes the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Act** as part of the bill. The Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science grants are the only funds in the nation that provide the state, local, and tribal forensic community a source of funding for over 90% of the disciplines within the forensic science community. They are also the majority of the Bureau of Justice Assistance funds available for the medical examiner/coroner community. This legislation will not only increase the funding for addressing backlog and capacity building, but it will enable the Office of Justice Programs to conduct tri-annual needs assessments, thus ensuring the forensic science community can get ahead of emerging drug and crime trends.

#### **Fully fund the FY23 Commerce, Justice, Science budget for forensic science:**

DNA: Fund grant at Senate level of \$173m

Paul Coverdell Grants: Fund grant at House level of \$40m

SAKII: Fund grant at House level of \$90m

OSAC and Forensic Science Research at NIST: \$34.5m (include \$2m for SDO's)

NamUs: \$5m in Byrne JAG

Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains Funding: \$3m in Byrne JAG

#### **Fully fund the FY23 Labor HHS budget for forensic science:**

Opioid Overdose Prevention and Surveillance \$601m

National Violent Death Reporting System \$34.5m