

CONSORTIUM OF FORENSIC SCIENCE ORGANIZATIONS
FY 19 ADVOCACY DIRECTIONS
April 2018

- 1. Review and edit the letter/talking points**
Provide specific information pertinent to your organization (examples of instances in your organization whereby Coverdell funding may or has already helped, your point of contact information, and if you are able offer the Member and staff a tour)
- 2. Determine Member of Congress and Senator**
Go to the below website and enter in your zip code
<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/map>
- 3. Call your Member of Congress and Senators and make your ask**
Call Congressional offices and ask who handles Judiciary or law enforcement issues. Advise staff of who you are and the position that you hold (JOHN SMITH, TITLE) and how Coverdell has helped you (see talking points). Ask for them to contact the Appropriations committee and request that Coverdell grants be funded at the amount authorized for FY19 the Justice for All Act (\$19m) rather than the proposed FY19 amount by the President of (\$10m), to continue funding the OSACs, and to fully fund the DNA grants at \$125m.
- 4. Follow up with the letter to the Member of Congress (see attached sample)**
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 their email.
- 5. Continue to follow-up with staff**
It will be important to develop a relationship with your Member of Congress' office. If they have technical questions please provide their name and number to CFSO and we can help.
- 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 such as 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 for \$19m as authorized in the Justice for All Act (rather than the President's proposed amount of \$10m), fund the OSACs at \$3m at NIST, and fully fund the DNA grants at \$125m.

Here at (YOUR CRIME LAB/ME), (PROVIDE INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO YOU ON HOW COVERDELL HAS HELPED AND WHY YOU NEED IT), (why the OSAC is important to your organization and how you have used the DNA grants).

The Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science grants are the only funding source in the nation that provide state and municipal forensic communities a source of funding for over 90% of the scientific disciplines within the crime lab community. These grants are also the primary source of 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 steadily, especially in the controlled substances, digital evidence, and toxicology disciplines. Many crime labs lack the capacity to process the amount of evidence we are currently being presented with. We are struggling to process all of it in a timely a manner, and more importantly within the timelines authorized by the judicial system. Without timely analysis, court trials are either continued or, in many cases, charges must be dismissed because the evidence examination has not been completed. Medical examiners need the Coverdell funds to address the opioid crisis and many other resource challenges. Given our current challenges, the loss of Coverdell grant funding would set the efficiency of our nation's crime labs and medical examiners offices back even further.

In addition to backlog reduction efforts, forensic science service providers rely on the Coverdell funding for training and continuing education. In the last few years, budgets have decreased and training funds for crime labs have been cut; some laboratories do not have a training budget at all and rely solely on federal grants to support all training and education. Crime laboratories need to send employees to training in order to stay current with the latest technologies, research, policies, and in many instances to maintain certifications for laboratory personnel. Without this essential funding, emerging technology and research will not be disseminated to the practicing forensic scientists who incorporate it into their procedures. Additionally, continuing education hours/credits 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 fund the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grant at \$19m as authorized by the Justice for All Act in the FY18 DOJ budget.

FACTS:

The FY19 Justice budget included \$10m for the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grant.

Coverdell is authorized for \$19m in FY19 per the Justice For All Act.

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 opioids and novel psychoactive substances that can take much longer to analyze than routine drugs and the backlog is growing.
- There is an influx of Opioid cases coming into the forensic labs and medical examiner offices, 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**