



**CONSORTIUM OF FORENSIC SCIENCE
ORGANIZATIONS (CFSO)**

FLASH BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2020

The mission of the CFSO is to speak with a single forensic science voice in matters of mutual interest to its member organizations, to influence public policy at the national level, and to make a compelling case for greater federal funding for public crime laboratories and medical examiner offices. The primary focus of the CFSO is local, state, and national policymakers, as well as the United States Congress.

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CFSO: A Year in Review, A Look Toward 2020

This past year has been a busy one for forensic science in Washington DC, and we expect the upcoming year to be equally as busy. We would like to thank the community for being so helpful in providing information when the CFSO asked, and always understanding the “urgency of timing.” We look forward to a continued year of successful partnership and work.

FUNDING

Coverdell \$30m, DNA Initiative \$132m (\$102m Debbie Smith, \$17m State and Local Forensic Science Initiatives, \$7m Kirk Bloodsworth Grants, \$4 SAFE), \$48m SAKI, \$3m OSAC.

DEBBIE SMITH REAUTHORIZATION

After close to two years of edits, participating in hearings, GAO report comments, negotiations, press conferences, and extensive lobbying HR 777, the Debbie Smith Reauthorization Act of 2019 was signed into law on December 30, 2020.

OSAC/RESEARCH LEGISLATION

As the 10th Anniversary of the National Academy of Sciences report on “Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward” was recognized and the OSAC matured enough to begin dialogue on OSAC 2.0, the CFSO released a statement on the achievements of the forensic science community since 2009, testified before Congress, and began to work with Congress on legislation to address the codification of OSAC and increased funding for research.

DOJ NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Needs Assessment requested by the CFSO in the Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2016 was published in December of 2019. The CFSO and many of its member organizations authored press releases. More information to come on actions pertaining to this report.

NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCE WEEK

For the 2nd year, the CFSO worked with Congress to pass legislation designating the third week of September as National Forensic Science Week.

MISSING PERSONS AND UNIDENTIFIED REMAINS ACT

The CFSO continues to work with the Congress for the passage of this bill which will increase funding for labs, medical examiners and toxicologists to address the remains of missing and unidentified individuals.

OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

CFSO continues working with Congress on the TAPS Act, the Sunshine Act, Janes Law, and legislative proposals regarding rape kit disposal. We are also engaged with the Energy & Commerce Committee on potential legislation regarding the opioid crisis and all Members of Congress, DOJ and CDC to address the urgent matters the medical examiner community is facing regarding shortages of pathologists.

A Look Toward 2020

While 2019 was a busy year, 2020 will be busier and more complex as it is a Presidential election year. This means that time is cut almost in half for getting things accomplished. The Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader have vowed to complete the FY21 appropriations bills on time (by September 30, 2020). While that seems ambitious it is possible given that the Congress passed a two-year budget resolution this year. Below is a list of items we know we will be working on, however, an election year also means the introduction of many pieces of other legislation.

We will continue to work with Congress on all of the pending legislation that was discussed above to move them toward passage. This will mean providing edits and comments as we move through the legislative process.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As this report was published in December of 2019, we will begin a campaign at the start of 2020 to educate policy-makers on the contents of the document and push for increased funding for all of the programs in the report.

JUSTICE FOR ALL ACT

As 2020 has come upon us, we are a year away from the grants authorized under the Justice for All Act expiring. This includes the critical Paul Coverdell grant program. As authorizations expire every five years, we have begun to review the existing law and are working with our member organizations to determine any updates or changes that will be needed.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Job Posting—OJP, NIJ Principal Deputy Director

As many of you know, Howard Spivak recently retired from NIJ and they are seeking applicants for his replacement. Details can be found at <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/558962600>

Coverdell and CEBR Grant Reassignment

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) has notified CFSO that they have started the process to manage all Coverdell and CEBR grants out of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) instead of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). We anticipate that the solicitations in the spring of 2020 will be issued by BJA. CFSO is carefully monitoring the transition for issues these changes may create for Forensic Science Service Providers. OJP intends on keeping the NamUS program, FTCoE, FLN-TWG, and FS-TWG at NIJ for at least the coming year. Forensic science research will continue to be coordinated out of NIJ. CFSO will keep you updated as further information becomes available.

2021 Federal Budget Numbers (President's Budget)

The President has submitted budget numbers that will now be negotiated by Congress. For the second year in a row, the President put money in the budget for Coverdell. While that is exciting, the number is far too small and we will be working with Congress to plus up that number. We have already begun working with the appropriations staff on the budget numbers for forensic science.

- **Coverdell--\$10m**
- **SAFE--\$4m**
- **DNA--\$97m**
- **SAKI--\$47m**