



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

March 10, 2015

The Honorable Richard Shelby

Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States Senate
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski

Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Culberson

Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
352 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah

Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science & Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
2301 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Shelby and Mikulski and Congressmen Culberson and Fattah:

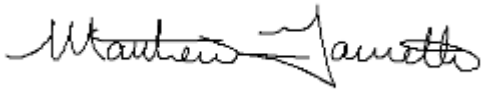
We, the undersigned forensic science organizations representing the forensic science community in its entirety thank you for your consistent support of the forensic sciences and request that you fund the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Grant Program at its authorized level of \$35 Million for FY16. This funding continues to be of the highest priority to the forensic sciences community as it allows us to not only address the non-DNA backlog of work in the laboratories but it is the only funding available to the medicolegal community. While the crime rate may have decreased the request for forensic services has dramatically increased.

These requests are due to the dramatic increase in utilization of forensic science services by the judicial system in the past several years. These increases are community wide, but the most dramatic increase in demand has been seen in the forensic disciplines of toxicology, controlled substances, latent prints, and firearms. Increased demand has resulted in increased backlogs and less time for a focus on technological advancement. We are asking you to recognize these backlogs and the financial needs of the forensic science community. These are some specifics of our issues that this grant program could help solve:

- Currently, 55% of the requests in crime laboratories are attributable to the toxicology, controlled substances, and latent fingerprint disciplines (Bureau of Justice Statistics Census of Publicly Funded Forensic Crime Laboratories 2009, published August 2012).
- Synthetic drugs are being created faster than legislation can legislate and faster than forensic laboratories can validate new testing methods to analyze for these drugs.
- Improvements in technologies used in the discipline of Toxicology now allow for the detection of additional drugs. Laboratories struggle to procure funding to acquire and properly implement these new toxicology technologies.

- Latent print backlogs have exploded. There are cases in the news each day that could have been solved years before if backlogs had not persisted.
- Trace analysis (fiber, glass, paint, soil, etc.) is a forensic science discipline that most laboratories cannot afford to provide due to the cost of the necessary instrumentation and the intense training required for analysts.
- Medical examiner and coroner offices in the United States lack sustainable funding mechanisms for critical elements of medicolegal death investigations including components of facility design, advanced technologies such as CT scanners and electronic databases, and access to supportive laboratory testing (e.g., toxicology). These elements are essential to enable medical examiners and coroners to be a platform of support for public safety, criminal justice and public health.

It is critical that forensic science laboratory leaders have flexible funding mechanisms like Coverdell to target the most critical backlogs and technology needs in non-DNA forensic science disciplines. A full appropriation of Coverdell will make a significant difference to forensic science laboratories and medicolegal death investigation offices in the United States.



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Chair,
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Kimberly Womack DHSc, ARNP-BC, SANE-A, CEN
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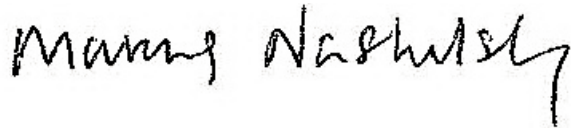
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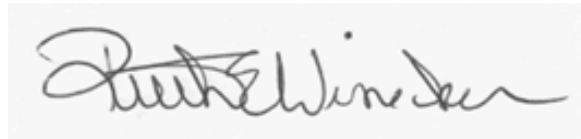
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