

It is the belief of IAI that an Office of Forensic Science (OFS) should be created to ensure that those resources provided to the community match the needs of the actual practitioners. This office should be equal to other components within the Office of Justice Programs, such as the Office of Victims Crime (OVC), the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing (SMART), the Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJDP), the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The use of forensic science has increased exponentially as the science has advanced and the tools have become available to both the defense and the prosecution. However, its representation in the Department of Justice has not changed. It remains a small office within the National Institute of Justice whose role is that of social science research. Forensic science is an applied science utilized within the Justice System. It is imperative that there is leadership that is commensurate to the role of forensic science to not only ensure that the resources are properly applied to the areas of the largest need but so that policies that are implemented can indeed be implemented within the actual operation of a crime lab or police organization.

We believe this position is not only that of the IAI but also that of other members of the forensic community including the Consortium of Forensic Science of which IAI is a member organization.

We strongly support the creation of this office to do the following:

- 1.) Create a strategic plan to advance the operation of our nations crime labs by implementing the appropriate recommendations.
 - a. Create a robust research agenda going forward between state and local practitioners and academia. As you are all aware, science is ever changing and therefore forensics as well. The IAI supports research being done at numerous agencies to include applied research as it directly relates to contemporary questions and issues put forth by the criminal justice system as well as basic research as it is conducted at many of our colleges and universities. The IAI also supports collaborative efforts amongst academia, forensic service providers, and forensic practitioners. The IAI supports and promotes the establishment of a federal repository of all forensic literature and research both past and present catalogued, which would be made available to interested parties. Currently there is nothing in existence and would be beneficial not only to practitioners but researchers as well. An OFS would be able to coordinate and lead this effort despite numerous agencies participating in research endeavors.
- 2.) Map out an appropriate strategic plan for sufficient resources that will not only assist in current operational issues but works to get in front of emerging problems such as the opioid issues. Acquiring and maintaining proper instrumentation, training, accreditation, and. Certification, and proper funding to implement any program, all comes back to sufficiently and consistently appropriating the resources to achieve not only the needs of the forensic communities but those being demanded by the stakeholders we serve including the judicial system. Without adequate funding and the continued commitment of those resources to achieve the recommendations, what good are they. If anything, these might as well be considered unfunded mandates. Instead of furthering the forensic community and its role in the criminal justice system, it will become the albatross around our necks as we are questioned by the judicial system as to why haven't these recommendations been put in place. The lack of implementation due to the lack of funding can also be viewed by our stakeholders as a failure on the part of the laboratory calling into question the reliability of its work.

- 3.) In conjunction with the establishment of the OFS, we support the codification of the OSAC's through legislative means insuring their continued existence. We recommend the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) continue to remain the overarching authority coordinating and facilitating the OSAC's meetings and work products. Many of the IAI members serve in various capacities on the OSAC and the IAI is extremely happy with and supports the OSAC's efforts.
- 4.) The IAI supports the continuous funding of the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Program. Future authorizations and appropriations should continue to increase with industry needs and technological advancements.

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