

The Crime Lab Project Asks You to Act Now to Help Crime Labs!

**PLEASE CALL OR E-MAIL* YOUR TWO U.S. SENATORS AND
YOUR MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**AND ASK THEM TO CONTINUE TO FUND
THE COVERDELL NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCES ACT OF 2000.**

*(Due to anti-anthrax measures, letters mailed through the post office will not reach your representative in time, if at all.)

WHAT IS THE COVERDELL ACT?

The Coverdell National Forensic Sciences Act was passed unanimously by both House and Senate in 2000 and signed into law. Of the \$135 million authorized, only \$15 million has been appropriated. That means only 11% of the funds needed have been given to crime labs.

Currently, some members of Congress are focusing only on DNA backlog funding. While DNA funding is important, labs must have Coverdell funding to meet the overall needs of labs — even to process DNA.

Here are the facts from the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations*

Request: Support full funding for the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Sciences Act of 2000 at the authorized level of \$135 million.

Why Support the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Sciences Act of 2000?

*It is the **only** mechanism which ensures that much needed money is available to all state and local laboratories, which analyze over 90% of all forensic cases in the United States.

*Only the Coverdell Act allows funding to go to medical examiners where most desperately needed.

*The current funding mechanisms are earmarked so heavily that many states do not receive funds, and thus are shutting down labs and ME's offices.

*DNA analysis and DNA backlog reduction funds support only 5% of what labs do.

Justification: The American Society of Crime Laboratories conducted a survey in 2003 of state and local forensic laboratories, which pointed out some of the critical needs of our nation's forensic community.

These included:

- 9000 more forensic scientists needed
- \$1.3 billion needed for facility modernization and construction
- 26% of forensic laboratories do not have basic computer systems to track evidence
- \$285 million needed in equipment by laboratories.

*The CFSO's highly respected member organizations include the American Society of Crime Lab Directors, the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, the International Association for Identification, the National Association of Medical Examiners, the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors - Laboratory Accreditation Board, and Forensic Quality Services (the latter two offer laboratory accreditation programs for crime labs).

Please see other side.

HOW TO HELP YOUR STATE AND LOCAL CRIME LABS
Your three phone calls or e-mails can make a difference!

E-mail or call your three Congressional representatives to tell them that it is important to you that Coverdell receives more funding. (Because of anti-anthrax measures, letters are delayed and do not always reach Congress.) If you don't know who your representatives are, you can usually find their offices listed in the government section of your phone book, or visit www.house.gov for the House of Representatives and www.senate.gov for your two Senators.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO CALL OR E-MAIL
YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVE!
They work for you, they're spending your taxes –
let them know that crime labs are important to you!

Here's a sample you can use for e-mailing or to help you with a call:

Dear [Title -- "Senator" or if a representative, "Mr." "Mrs." or "Ms."] [Last Name of the Member of Congress]

Please support funding of the **Paul Coverdell National Forensic Sciences Act of 2000** at the full authorized level of \$135 million. Continued funding of the Coverdell Act is urgently needed by crime labs, which handle 90% of all criminal cases in the United States.

Funding Coverdell will make a critical difference in the forensic sciences in the U.S.. While DNA processing is important, it is only 5% of the work done by labs. Medical examiners offices are closing down due to the lack of funds. The Department of Justice found that public crime labs ended 2002 with over 500,000 backlogged cases, in all areas of evidence examination. A survey of labs by the American Society of Crime Lab Directors revealed that labs were severely understaffed, working in outdated or inadequate facilities, and that more than 1 out of 4 labs do not have basic computer systems to track evidence.

As a result, victims and their families wait months or years for lab results, cases are lost or not brought to trial, evidence is mishandled, and criminals remain at large. These problems ultimately affect the welfare and safety of the entire country, including homeland security. Funding of the Coverdell Act should be a high priority.

Sincerely,
Your Name
Address
City, State, ZIP

Please note that it is not enough to just put your name and e-mail address on the message -- the member of Congress will respond better to message with a complete address, especially if you live in his or her district or state.

Please let us know whom you contacted and when by sending an e-mail to crime@crimelabproject.com , so that we can follow up with your representatives.

VISIT WWW.CRIMELABPROJECT.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.