



CONSORTIUM OF FORENSIC SCIENCE ORGANIZATIONS (CFSO)

FLASH BRIEF

JANUARY 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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Forensic Science Needs Assessment Published

The CFSO applauds the Department of Justice for the immense undertaking and completion of the Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices Report to Congress. Over the past twenty years, forensic science has and continues to evolve, becoming more reliable and discriminating. Its use to fight crime and exonerate those who are innocent has expanded tremendously. Forensic science is now routinely used in the courtroom and is expected by jurors. The nation's front-line forensic practitioners continually struggle to keep up with the ever-increasing demand for services. Because of this, the CFSO asked the United States Congress to include an assessment of the community's operational needs in the FY2016 Justice for All Act. The CFSO is pleased that Congress agreed with this request and included this needs assessment in their 2016 Justice for All Reauthorization Act. This was the first attempt in determining the approximate cost to meet the current demand for services and the related costs of testimony by forensic service providers from public laboratories while ensuring valid and reliable results. Download the full CFSO press release [here](#) from the CFSO website. [AAFS](#), [ASCLD](#), and [IAI](#), also released press statements that can be found on the [CFSO website](#). The Department of Justice spent the last two years meeting with the various forensic science organizations, key forensic science service providers, and related stakeholders to determine the state of the forensic community, and what resources are needed to keep up with the growing demand for forensic examinations. The report concludes there is not sufficient funding to process the ever-increasing amounts of forensic evidence. It states that the state, county, local and tribal crime laboratories including medical examiner/coroner offices have a \$640 million deficit for normal operations, but the increase of current opioid expenditures adds another \$270 million to that cost. This report should serve as a roadmap for the funding the federal government provides to our community. Click [here](#) to see full report

Debbie Smith Act Reauthorization

On December 30, 2019 President Trump signed H.R. 777, The Debbie Smith Reauthorization Act of 2019 into law. CFSO consistently provided subject matter expertise regarding the various technical issues of this bill to Congressional staff and advocated for the passage of this bill in the House and Senate. In short, the House introduced the initial reauthorization of this bill in the Violence Against Women Act. The Senate, however, introduced its own version of the bill, S. 820. S.820 included provisions that provide guidance on how to implement recommendations made by the GAO March 2019 report “DNA Evidence, DOJ Should Improve Performance Measurement and Properly Design Controls for Nationwide Grant Programs” and standard oversight language. Both provisions were requests put forth by Senator Grassley (IA). Again, CFSO worked with the Senate to ensure that S. 820 would not be problematic for forensic providers to implement. The House did not pass the Senate version; rather it introduced a third draft of the bill, HR 777. HR 777 did not include the GAO language, but it did include the standard oversight language. Ultimately, HR 777 passed the House and Senate and President Trump signed it into law. To see the specific changes proposed in the first two versions and those implemented in the final bill, please click [here](#) for the side-by-side analysis published on the CFSO website. Because the Senate asked for specific accountability measures in future DOJ solicitations, CFSO will continue to monitor those solicitation terms to ensure that it will not put an undue burden on labs for applications or compliance. Our thanks to Senators Grassley, Cornyn, Feinstein and Representatives Maloney and Wagner for all their work on this bill. We also wish to thank the other advocacy organizations that partnered with us on this effort.

Federal Forensics Budget

Although there was a brief continuing resolution this year, the budget did pass before the end of the calendar year. Below is a chart of the funding for Forensic Science in DOJ, DOC and CDC. Please click [here](#) for the full budget brief.

PROGRAM	REQUEST	HOUSE	SENATE	FINAL
DOJ				
Paul Coverdell Forensic Science	\$ 10,000	\$ 30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
DNA Initiative	\$105,000	\$142,000	\$136,000	\$132,000
Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grants (note it is not Debbie Smith in Admin budget rather the DNA Analysis, Capacity Enhancement and other Forensic Activities)		(\$100,000)	(\$125,000)	(\$102,000)
State and Local Forensic Activities	0	(\$30,000)	0	(\$17,000)
Kirk Bloodsworth Post-Conviction DNA Testing Grants	\$4,000	(\$8,000)	(\$7,000)	(\$7,000)

Sexual Assault Forensic Exam Program Grants	\$4,000	(\$4,000)	(\$4,000)	(\$4,000)
SAKI	\$47,500	\$49,000	\$48,000	\$48,000
NIST				
OSAC	0	\$3m	\$3m	\$3.15
Forensic Technical Merit		\$1m	\$1m	\$1.00
CDC				
Opioid Overdose Prevention and Surveillance				\$475.58
National Violent Death Reporting System				\$23.5