

## **THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND FORENSIC SCIENCE REFORM ACT**

*The Criminal Justice and Forensic Science Reform Act seeks to strengthen and improve the criminal justice system by helping to ensure that evidence derived from forensic science analysis is accurate, reliable, and scientifically grounded. The bill promotes national accreditation and certification standards and stronger oversight for forensic labs and practitioners, as well as the development of best practices and research. Senator Leahy and Senator Cornyn are the lead cosponsors of this bill.*

**This legislation ensures that forensic science reform efforts will be guided by experts and practitioners with both criminal justice expertise and scientific independence.**

- A Forensic Science Board (FSB) will be appointed by the President and will be composed of scientists, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other key stakeholders. The membership of the FSB will be carefully balanced, and a majority of the FSB's members will be scientists.
- An Office of Forensic Science (OFS) will be created within the Office of the Deputy Attorney General at the Department of Justice. The OFS will be led by a Director appointed by the Attorney General.
- Committees comprised entirely of scientists will examine each individual forensic science discipline to determine research needs and help develop standards and best practices. The Committees will be overseen by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), a respected scientific agency.
- The Director of OFS and the Director of NIST will establish a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate implementation of this framework.

**This legislation helps ensure rigorous and consistent standards in the forensic science disciplines, including standards for the accreditation of forensic science facilities and the certification of forensic science professionals.**

- The bill requires that all forensic science laboratories that receive federal funding be accredited according to rigorous standards set by the FSB and OFS.
- The bill requires all relevant personnel who perform forensic work for any laboratory or agency that receives federal money to become certified in their fields by meeting basic proficiency, education, and training requirements.
- The bill establishes a process for determining standards and best practices in each forensic science discipline.
- The bill also provides support for State and local laboratories in order to meet the accreditation and certification standards.

**This legislation promotes foundational and innovative peer-reviewed scientific research that will strengthen the forensic sciences, as well as important training for judges, attorneys, and law enforcement.**

- The OFS, with input from the Committees and the FSB, will establish research priorities to help focus funding on the most serious needs for scientific research related to the forensic sciences.
- Grant programs will be overseen by NIST, providing peer-reviewed scientific research to answer fundamental questions and promote innovation in the forensic sciences.
- The bill also funds research into new technologies and techniques that will allow forensic testing to be done more quickly, more efficiently, and more accurately.