



**CONSORTIUM OF FORENSIC SCIENCE  
ORGANIZATIONS (CFSO)**

**FLASH BRIEF**

DECEMBER 2024

**The mission of the CFSO is to speak with a single forensic science voice on behalf of its member organizations of matters of mutual interest regarding forensic science, 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 and coroner offices. The primary focus of the CFSO is national, state, and local policymakers, as well as the United States Congress.**

**YEAR IN REVIEW**

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The second half of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2024 has seen a great deal of activity, but very little closure on issues concerning the forensic science community. In fact, Congress passed 396 bills in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress (2023-2024) to date compared with 1,234 bills in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. The 118<sup>th</sup> second half, however, has been a busy one for forensics with numerous pieces of legislation being proposed, drafted, and introduced. The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) continues to work tirelessly with members of Congress to shape legislation in a manner helpful to the forensic science service provider community, and that continues to advance forensic science, while ultimately benefiting the stakeholder community we serve.

The federal budget for this fiscal year has not been passed in regular order for yet another year, and as we end the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2024 we are faced with another continuing resolution (CR). At this time, the current CR will expire on March 14, 2025; it is relatively clean following several revisions. It funds the government, provides \$100B in disaster aid, extends part of the farm bill, and extends the fentanyl rescheduling date to March 31, 2025.

As always, the goal of CFSO has been to educate policymakers on the needs of the forensic science community and to that end we have worked successfully with Congress to create a first of its kind Forensic Science Caucus in the House of Representatives. The caucus consists of members, who share a common interest in forensic science and seek to educate fellow Members of Congress. The caucus is bipartisan, and the Co-chairs are Congressman Guest (R-MS) and Congressman Cleaver (D-MO). On November 15, 2024, the caucus held its inaugural event, with the participation of CFSO Chair Matthew Gamette, to provide information on

forensic investigative genealogy. Click on this link: [Congressional Caucus Inaugural Meeting](#) to view the event. We will provide you more information as it is announced on caucus sponsored events of the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress. All information about forensic science in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and other CFSO advocacy efforts can be found on the [CFSO Website](#) and specifically the [Current Legislative and Advocacy Efforts](#) page of the website.

## APPROPRIATIONS

An integral authority of Congress is the power of the purse. As we are under a continuing resolution (CR), we do not have final figures for FY25, but you can click this [link](#) to see our last budget newsletter that provides the proposed budget numbers offered in the House and Senate bills. In addition, please review the language contained in this newsletter. The wording is also in the House and Senate bills. We have worked with Congress to not only provide the appropriate funding levels, but also to include language in the DOJ section regarding the status of interoperability of Automated Biometric Identification Systems (ABIS), Medical and Coroner Research needs, and Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy (FIGG) technology. In support of the CDC and their Coordinating Office for Medical Examiners and Coroners (COMEC), we promoted the needs of the Medical and Coroner Examiner systems in expanding case-level syndromic surveillance data in the Health and Human Services appropriations bill.

## POLICY LEGISLATION INTRODUCED AND/OR PASSED

**The Debbie Smith Act.** This act, which supports DNA analysis of “backlogged” samples, was up for re-authorization. We worked with Congress and Debbie Smith to pass the re-authorization of this grant program. It was signed into law on July 30, 2024, as PL 118-72. Click on this link for the text of the law and a CFSO Memo: [Bill Text](#) Of note, the audit requirements were also reauthorized through the Debbie Smith Act. Click [here](#) for a CFSO memo on the Debbie Smith Act passage.

**National Forensic Science Week Resolution.** Senator Crapo (ID) along with Senator Padilla (CA) and Senator Risch (ID) again passed a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of Forensic Science Week on September 23, 2024. See text of the resolution here : [Bill Text](#)

**National Medicolegal Death Investigation Professionals Week.** Senators Cornyn and Murphy introduced a resolution recognizing the National MDI Professionals Week during the week of January 21, 2024, and supporting its goals and ideals. See text of the resolution here: [Bill Text](#)

**Strengthening the Medical Examiner and Coroner System Act of 2024.** Through a bipartisan and bicameral effort Senators Cornyn (TX) and Murphy (CT) along with Congressman Guest (MS) and Congressman Cleaver (MO) introduced legislation to strengthen the medical examiner, coroner and toxicologist systems through fellowships and training grants. [Senate Bill Text \(S. 4159\)](#) [House Bill Text \(H.R. 8069\)](#) Also, see an advocacy package for this bill on the CFSO website to reach out to your policymakers and request support. [Advocacy Packet for SMECSA 2024](#)

**The Carla Walker Act.** Senator Cornyn (TX) and Senator Welch (VT) introduced the Carla Walker Act with a companion bill in the House from Congressman Kelly Armstrong (ND). We worked extensively with the

Members of Congress and other concerned stakeholders involved in drafting this legislation that will provide two grants to the forensic science community for FIGG outsourcing and procuring in-house technology. This legislation will be re-introduced in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress and is expected to pass. See summary and text here: [Carla Walker Act Bill Text](#)

**Cold Case Modernization Act.** CFSO worked with Congressman Reschenthaler (PA) to introduce the Cold Case Modernization Act. This legislation modifies an existing statute to allow use of forensic investigative genetic genealogy (FIGG) for non-homicide cases of unidentified human remains. See text here: [Bill Text \(H.R. 6688\)](#)

**TRACE Act.** Introduced by Congressman Neguse (CO) and supported by 13 bipartisan Members of Congress, this bill creates a new data field in NamUs to specify if the last known location of a missing person was located on federal lands. The bill has a Senate companion bill that is also bipartisan. See text here: [H.R. 3868 \(Neguse et al.\) S.2120 \(Tillis, Cornyn, Padilla, Blumenthal, Murphy\)](#)

**Stop Smuggling Illicit Synthetic Drugs on US Transportation Networks Act of 2024.** Introduced by Senator Cantwell (WA) this bill, among other things, will direct NIST to include the forensic science practitioners in the Rapid Drug Analysis and Research (RaDAR) program and creates a pilot program with the forensic science community to develop a “regional network of strategic emerging drug laboratories to gather and publish information relating to emerging trends in illicit drug use and trafficking”. See text and summary here: [Bill Text](#)

## LEGISLATION IN PROGRESS

CFSO is currently engaged with several members of Congress on numerous other pieces of legislation that pertain to the forensic science community. The majority of this legislation addresses Fentanyl and emerging drug crisis issues. Other topics address research in the forensic sciences and the ongoing issues surrounding sexual assault kits. We will keep you abreast through our CFSO newsletters or if it is of significant interest to the community, we will forward emails to each of our member organizations to be disseminated to their respective members.

## 119<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS PREPARATION

CFSO is compiling their priorities for the incoming 119<sup>th</sup> Congress. Our priorities are based on feedback from our member organizations through their respective CFSO Board member (AAFS, ASCLD, IAI, SOFT, ABFT, NAME, and IACME). Our list of priorities will be presented and open for discussion at the upcoming AAFS meeting on Monday, February 17, 2025 from 6-7pm. If you have thoughts or ideas, please feel free to share them with your Board representative listed on the first page of this newsletter.

As with each passing year, the CFSO is proud of the accomplishments that we have achieved for the forensic community through the hard work of our government relations expert and our Board of Directors. We anticipate that in 2025, given our goal of continuous improvement in forensics throughout the U.S., we will advance forensic science one more step.