



*American Academy of Forensic Sciences
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/
Laboratory Accreditation Board
International Association for Identification
National Association of Medical Examiners
Society of Forensic Toxicologists/
American Board of Forensic Toxicology*

September 5, 2013

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General of the United States
US Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

We were very pleased that the U.S. Department of Justice and other Federal agencies have put in place the mechanism to form the National Commission on Forensic Science. The forensic science community has long believed that there is a need for Federal direction and guidance to ensure consistency within the forensic science community. However, we are writing to you today to express concern with some features of the Charter issued by the U.S. Department of Justice, National Commission on Forensic Science under your signature of March 18, 2013.

We remain concerned with the representation of the State and Local practitioners on the Commission and the ability of the practitioner to truly have a say in the final outcome of the recommendations. It is our request that the State and Local forensic science individuals participating in the Commission be allowed to vote and that the community at large be a part of the decision-making process in creating the standards, protocols, methods, and recommendations your office will be receiving from the Commission and that those recommendations be publicly published with a period for comment prior to being considered for final adoption.

Forensic science is a combined Federal, State and Local endeavor. Crime laboratories at all levels are intertwined and crime does not recognize governmental boundaries. The Federal Government operates all databases for DNA, firearms and fingerprints and the State and Local crime laboratories must comply with the regulations set forth by the Federal Government in order to enter data into these systems. In addition, the standards each laboratory must meet for accreditation are internationally recognized, objective standards, including ISO 17025.

The Commission will be recommending areas for standards development; therefore, it is imperative that the voice of the State and Local crime laboratory community be present at these discussions to provide

information and perspective to assist in the shaping the recommendations of the Commission in regards to standards.

Our second concern is that the Commission's Charter indicates there will be no recommendations or development of guidance for digital evidence. Digital evidence is considered a "forensic discipline" by most accrediting bodies and has its own Scientific Working Group (SWG) and Section in the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Digital evidence should be included in the "Objectives and Scope of Activities" which the Commission will undertake. To not do so somehow implies that the digital evidence discipline does not rise to the same level as other forensic disciplines such as DNA analysis or is, for some reason, exempt from the same standards as other disciplines.

As you know, our community and practitioners support more guidance and leadership for the forensic science community and have been working tirelessly with Congress to pass legislation to provide this critical framework. We do not believe the entire structure must be recreated. As with any science, continued research, development of standards, training and grant support must evolve from the needs of the community with input from both within and from outside the relevant community. Only with discussion and inclusion of all groups will changes be optimized for the maximum benefit.

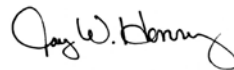
Respectfully Submitted,



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