

S 132

Criminal Justice and Forensic Science Reform Act of 2011

Congress: 112 (2011–2013, Ended)

Chamber: Senate

Policy Area: Crime and Law Enforcement

Introduced: Jan 25, 2011

Current Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (text of measure as introduced: CR S195-2)

Latest Action: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (text of measure as introduced: CR S195-202) (Jan 25, 2011)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/senate-bill/132>

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Leahy, Patrick J. [D-VT]

Party: Democratic • **State:** VT • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors

No cosponsors are listed for this bill.

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Judiciary Committee	Senate	Referred To	Jan 25, 2011

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Crime and Law Enforcement

Related Bills

No related bills are listed.

Criminal Justice and Forensic Science Reform Act of 2011 - Establishes an Office of Forensic Science (the Office) within the Office of the Deputy Attorney General in the Department of Justice (DOJ). Requires the Director of the Office (the Director) to: (1) establish, implement, and enforce standards for forensic science laboratory accreditation and forensic science personnel certification; (2) establish a comprehensive strategy for scientific research in the forensic sciences; (3) establish and implement standards and best practices for forensic science disciplines; (4) define "forensic science discipline" and "forensic science laboratory"; (5) establish and maintain a list of forensic science disciplines; and (6) establish committees to examine research needs, standards, best practices, and certification standards for the forensic science disciplines.

Establishes a Forensic Science Board to promote confidence in the criminal justice system through standards and best practices and ensuring consistency, scientific validity, and accuracy regarding forensic testing, analysis, identification, and comparisons, the results of which may be used during the course of a criminal investigation or court proceeding.

Prohibits a forensic science laboratory or covered entity (an entity that is not a forensic science laboratory and that conducts forensic testing) from receiving federal funds unless: (1) the Director has verified that the laboratory has been accredited in accordance with the standards and procedures established under this Act; and (2) all relevant personnel (individuals who conduct forensic testing or testify about evidence prepared by such individuals) of the laboratory or covered entity are certified under this Act. Requires the Director to establish standards for the certification of personnel and determine whether a laboratory or entity is eligible for federal funds. Authorizes the Director of the National Institute of Justice to make grants and provide technical assistance to laboratories and entities seeking accreditation.

Requires the Board to recommend and the Director to establish: (1) a comprehensive strategy for fostering and improving peer-reviewed scientific research relating to the forensic science disciplines; and (2) a list of priorities for forensic science research funding. Directs: (1) the Board to submit to the Director a plan for encouraging collaboration among universities, nonprofit research institutions, state and local forensic science laboratories, private forensic science laboratories, private corporations, and the federal government to develop and perform cost-effective and reliable research in the forensic sciences; and (2) the Director to establish and disseminate uniform standards and best practices for the forensic science discipline. Requires the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to make grants to eligible entities to conduct peer-reviewed scientific research in areas consistent with the Director's research priorities.

Requires the Board to submit and the Director to implement: (1) a plan for supporting, and a standardized curriculum for, the education and training of judges, attorneys, and law enforcement personnel in the forensic sciences and fundamental scientific principles; (2) a plan for supporting the development of undergraduate and graduate educational programs in the forensic science disciplines and related fields, if deemed appropriate; and (3) a plan to encourage the federal government and state and local governments to implement systems to ensure that qualified individuals perform medical-legal death examinations and to encourage qualified individuals to enter the field.

Directs the Board and the Director to regularly coordinate with: (1) relevant federal agencies to make efficient and appropriate use of research expertise and funding; and (2) the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other relevant federal agencies to determine ways in which the forensic science disciplines may assist in homeland security and emergency preparedness.

Requires the Director to develop a system for any individual to provide information regarding lack of compliance with standards established under this Act.

Requires the Board to submit and the Director to implement: (1) a plan to require interoperability among databases and technologies in each of the forensic science disciplines among all levels of government, in all states, and with the private sector; and (2) a recommended code of ethics for the forensic science disciplines.

Actions Timeline

- **Jan 25, 2011:** Introduced in Senate
- **Jan 25, 2011:** Sponsor introductory remarks on measure. (CR S194-195)
- **Jan 25, 2011:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (text of measure as introduced: CR S195-202)