

S 2022

Forensic Science and Standards Act of 2014

Congress: 113 (2013–2015, Ended)

Chamber: Senate

Policy Area: Science, Technology, Communications

Introduced: Feb 12, 2014

Current Status: By Senator Rockefeller from Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation filed written report.

Latest Action: By Senator Rockefeller from Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation filed written report.

Report No. 113-320. (Dec 12, 2014)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/2022>

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Rockefeller, John D., IV [D-WV]

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

Cosponsors (1 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Blumenthal, Richard [D-CT]	D · CT		Apr 28, 2014

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee	Senate	Reported By	Dec 8, 2014

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Science, Technology, Communications

Related Bills

Bill	Relationship	Last Action
113 HR 3064	Related bill	Oct 15, 2013: Referred to the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations.

Forensic Science and Standards Act of 2014 - (Sec. 4) Establishes a National Forensic Science Research Initiative to improve, expand, and coordinate federal research in forensic sciences (scientific research and its application to the recognition, collection, preservation, evaluation, and analysis of evidence for use in investigations and legal proceedings). Includes the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and other federal departments, agencies, and offices contributing to research in forensic science in the Initiative.

Establishes a National Forensic Science Coordinating Office with a full-time director to be located at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Makes the Director responsible for carrying out the provisions of this section, including the development and implementation of a unified federal research strategy. Requires the federal agencies participating in the Initiative to share responsibility for funding the Office and permits the agencies to dedicate staff to the Office.

Establishes an interagency forensic science committee to be co-chaired by the Director of the Coordinating Office and a senior scientist from an agency participating in the Initiative.

Requires the NSF to contract with the National Academy of Sciences, or a similar independent science entity, to develop a report that: (1) identifies the most critical forensic science disciplines that require further research, and (2) makes recommendations for research to strengthen the scientific foundation in the disciplines.

Requires the Director of the Coordinating Office, in coordination with the Interagency Committee, to oversee: the development of a unified federal research strategy; a five-year roadmap for the implementation of the strategy; and any necessary programs, policies, and budgets to support the implementation of the roadmap.

Requires the Director of the Coordinating Office, in coordination with the Interagency Committee, to evaluate the Initiative and report to Congress on a biennial basis. Sets forth reporting requirements and deadlines related to the strategy and the roadmap.

(Sec. 5) Directs federal agencies participating in the Initiative to improve the foundation and practice of forensic science by: (1) conducting or supporting research consistent with the unified federal research strategy; (2) building relationships between forensic science practitioners and the research community; (3) encouraging and promoting education and training; and (4) broadly disseminating the results of the research.

Requires all external forensic science research grants awarded by federal agencies under this section to be consistent with the merit review criteria as approved by the National Science Board and as described in the National Science Foundation Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide. Requires all research conducted from grants awarded under this section to take into consideration the requirements of peer-reviewed scientific journals, and encourage the communication and open exchange of data and results.

Directs NSF to: (1) award grants to improve the foundation of forensic science; (2) to establish one or more multidisciplinary forensic research centers led by public-private partnerships between universities, industry, state or local entities, and federal agencies; and (3) conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the forensic science research grants awarded by the NSF and multidisciplinary research centers every four years.

Directs NIST to: (1) establish and operate a competitively selected Center of Excellence focusing on measurement sciences, technology, and standards in forensic science, and (2) conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Center and

report to Congress on the results.

(Sec. 6) Permits federal agencies to use existing prizes and challenge authority to advance forensic science research needs and priorities. Directs NIST or DOJ to provide or contract with a non-federal party to prepare data sets and physical specimens to be shared without limitation for the purpose of a prize or a challenge.

(Sec. 7) Directs NIST to: (1) identify and coordinate the development of voluntary consensus forensic science standards; (2) develop measurement standards and standard reference materials to support forensic science disciplines; (3) test and validate existing standards, and (4) provide independent validation of forensic science measurements and methods.

Requires NIST to ensure that any proposed voluntary consensus standards, guidelines, or methods are publicly available, and that the forensic community has an opportunity for public review and comment.

Directs the NIST and DOJ to establish scientific area committees to identify gaps in and opportunities for standards development in the forensic sciences and serve as the primary mechanism for identifying and coordinating the development of voluntary consensus forensic science standards.

(Sec. 8) Directs NIST and DOJ to establish a National Commission on Forensic Science to provide advice to the agencies participating in the unified federal research strategy and review guidance on standards development in forensic science. Requires the Director of the NIST and the Attorney General, or their designees, to co-chair the Commission.

(Sec. 9) Directs DOJ to: (1) encourage the broad adoption of forensic science standards and to require DOJ and other federal laboratories to adopt these standards, as appropriate, (2) promote accreditation and certification based on forensic science standards, and (3) promote recommendations made by the National Commission on Forensic Science.

Amends the National Institute of Standards and Technology Act to require NIST to identify and coordinate the development of voluntary consensus forensic science standards to enhance the validity and reliability of forensic science activities.

Actions Timeline

- **Dec 12, 2014:** By Senator Rockefeller from Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation filed written report. Report No. 113-320.
- **Dec 8, 2014:** Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Reported by Senator Rockefeller with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. Without written report.
- **Dec 8, 2014:** Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 619.
- **Apr 9, 2014:** Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Ordered to be reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute favorably.
- **Feb 12, 2014:** Introduced in Senate
- **Feb 12, 2014:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.