

## S 2177

### Criminal Justice and Forensic Science Reform Act

**Congress:** 113 (2013–2015, Ended)

**Chamber:** Senate

**Policy Area:** Crime and Law Enforcement

**Introduced:** Mar 27, 2014

**Current Status:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (text of measure as introduced: CR S1822-

**Latest Action:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (text of measure as introduced: CR S1822-1830) (Mar 27, 2014)

**Official Text:** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/2177>

### Sponsor

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

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

### Cosponsors (2 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Cornyn, John [R-TX]	R · TX		Mar 27, 2014
Sen. Blumenthal, Richard [D-CT]	D · CT		May 6, 2014

### Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Judiciary Committee	Senate	Referred To	Mar 27, 2014

### Subjects & Policy Tags

#### Policy Area:

Crime and Law Enforcement

### Related Bills

No related bills are listed.

Criminal Justice and Forensic Science Reform Act - Establishes an Office of Forensic Science within the Office of the Deputy Attorney General in the Department of Justice (DOJ). Requires the Director of the Office to: (1) establish with the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure collaboration and coordination in the implementation of this Act; (2) establish, lead, and oversee implementation of standards for forensic science laboratory accreditation and forensic science personnel certification; (3) establish a comprehensive strategy for scientific research in the forensic sciences; (4) establish standards and best practices for forensic science disciplines; (5) define "forensic science discipline" and "forensic science laboratory" for purposes of this Act and establish and maintain a list of forensic science disciplines; (6) establish committees to examine research needs, standards, best practices, and certification standards for the forensic science disciplines; and (7) establish a code of ethics for the forensic science disciplines.

Establishes a Forensic Science Board to strengthen and promote confidence in the criminal justice system by promoting standards and best practices and ensuring scientific validity, reliability, and accuracy of forensic testing, analysis, identification, and comparisons, the results of which may be used during the course of a criminal investigation or criminal 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. Directs the Director of the National Institute of Justice to develop a plan for assisting and supporting forensic science laboratories and covered entities in obtaining accreditation and certifications for relevant personnel.

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 disciplines.

Authorizes the Director of 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 plans: (1) 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) for supporting the development of undergraduate and graduate educational programs in the forensic science disciplines and related fields; and (3) for encouraging governments to implement systems to ensure that qualified individuals perform medical-legal death examinations and for encouraging 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; (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; and (3) the intelligence community to make use of research and new technologies suitable for forensic science.

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

Requires the Director to: (1) conduct a needs assessment of state and local forensic service providers to evaluate their capacity and resource needs, (2) develop a national strategy for developing the capacity and resources of state and local forensic science providers, and (3) update such assessment and strategy at least once every five years.

## **Actions Timeline**

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- **Mar 27, 2014:** Introduced in Senate
- **Mar 27, 2014:** Sponsor introductory remarks on measure. (CR S1821-1822)
- **Mar 27, 2014:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. (text of measure as introduced: CR S1822-1830)