



Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University

Inspector General Issues ‘Strong Indictment’ of Federal Forensic Oversight; U.S. Senate Hearing on Crime Lab Funding Program Set for Wednesday

News from the Innocence Project

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Today, the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Justice issued a report showing that the federal government is failing to provide critical forensic science oversight as required by Congress. Wednesday morning, the Senate Judiciary Committee will hold hearings on the same subject. The federal programs at issue provide funds to assist federal and state authorities to realize the full potential of DNA to solve crimes and protect the innocent.

Today’s report is at: <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/reports/OJP/e0801/final.pdf>.

Following is a statement from Innocence Project Co-Director Peter Neufeld on today’s report and Wednesday’s hearing. (Neufeld, accompanied by several people who were exonerated through DNA testing after being wrongfully convicted, will testify at Wednesday’s hearing.)

“Today’s report is a very strong indictment of the federal government’s unwillingness to enforce badly needed forensic oversight. This is the only government mechanism in the country to investigate crime lab missteps and misconduct.

“Over the last two years, we have identified how the federal government has failed to hold states accountable when their crime labs make errors or engage in actual misconduct. If crime lab mistakes and misconduct aren’t investigated and remedied, more innocent people will be wrongfully convicted while perpetrators of crime remain at large.

“Today’s report shows how much more the federal government needs to do in this area, and on Wednesday we will outline in more detail the extent to which states and the Department of Justice are not complying with the law Congress passed in 2004. We will explain what states have failed to do under the grant program – and what the consequences are for the integrity of forensic science in the criminal justice system.”

The Senate Judiciary Committee hearing will be at 10 a.m. Wednesday (January 23) in 226 Dirksen Building.



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The Innocence Project, which is affiliated with Cardozo School of Law, is a national litigation and public policy organization dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted people through DNA testing and reforming the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice. To date, 212 people nationwide have been exonerated through DNA testing; 65% of those wrongful convictions were caused, at least in part, by limited, unreliable or fraudulent forensic science.