

This week I have three items for the membership. The first is a follow-up update from the American Board of Criminalistics certification program. Second is an update on how things stand in Congress. Finally, some thanks to one of our member labs. I am hoping that you have already received, or will soon receive, an update from your advocacy POC. We circulated out some important information through them this week. If you have not heard from them, please reach out using the contact information on the ASCLD website for your POC. We appreciate the information that is coming back to us through the POCs as that has become a very important information sharing tool.

ABC Certification Follow-up:

You should have received an email from me this week about changes to the ABC certification program process to obtain continuing education credits. I am pleased to report that I had a very productive conversation this week with ABC President Chris Hamburg and ABC Board Member and ASCLD ABC representative Jason Linder. President Hamburg communicated his sincere apology if the changes negatively impacted any ASCLD member. He is committed to following up personally with several ASCLD members that expressed concern. We visited about communication mechanisms such as webinars, emails, and the CLM that ASCLD has available to get the ABC message out to our members. Chris provided the following link to explain the changes to ABC members. ABC/ASCLD liaison Jason Linder also expressed his commitment to improve communication between the two organizations and will be providing regular updates to the ASCLD Board and membership. ASCLD committed to make some changes to our symposium certificates that will allow our members to apply to ABC for continuing education points with a little less effort. I also discussed with President Hamburg our desire to see the process simplified for our members to apply for these points. He assured me that the ABC Board is currently working on simplifying the process and making it more electronic. He also promised to update the ASCLD membership on these changes in the next few months before they go live. I also express appreciation to those ASCLD members that reached out to me to share concerns and ask questions.

<http://www.criminalistics.com/uploads/3/2/3/3/32334973/recertificationpointchangeletter.pdf>

Congress and Federal Budget Update:

Congress is in session to try to pass the budget (this includes the Commerce, Justice, Science-CJS Appropriations). There is much uncertainty due to the debate on the border wall and the Russia investigation. Rumors are swirling about a year-long Continuing Resolution (CR) and various options to fund the wall at different levels. If there is a CR, then the Justice budget would be funded at last year's levels. The Justice budget last year was good for the forensics community with \$30m in Coverdell, \$130m in DNA, \$2.4m for NAMUS, and \$4m for OSAC). However, negotiations are in the works so we likely won't know until the last minute before Congress leaves town. It may be that all but the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill passes. More to come

over the next few days and weeks as we wrap up the 115th Congress. Also, watch the 2018 Farm Bill. We are keeping a very close eye on that bill as it will likely impact how many of us are working CBD and Marijuana cases in our labs.

With the House changing to the Democrats taking the Majority in the next session, Congress is beginning to pick leadership for Committees etc. To date, the Republicans have chosen for the Full Judiciary Committee Ranking Rep. Collins (GA) and Full Appropriations Rep. Granger (TX). The Senate has not chosen leadership at this point. Stay tuned for more information. Keep an eye out for the most recent advocacy committee communication from your POC that should be coming early this week. It has updates on other things going on in Congress.

DCFS Tour:

I want to express our thanks to the Washington DC Department of Forensic Sciences and Medical Examiner Office for hosting a tour of their facility for Senate and House staffers. Approximately 20 Judiciary Committee staffers were able to see an autopsy and visit the toxicology, DNA, latent print, firearms, and chemistry units. The lab was able to show the staff a sexual assault kit and talk about processing. They discussed the opioid crisis as they talked about how those samples are processed through a toxicology and chemistry lab. Challenges and advances in the latent print and firearm disciplines were discussed and new technology was demonstrated for the staffers. The tour, coordinated by Director Jenifer Smith and Medical Examiner Doctor Roger Mitchell, was very helpful for the staffers to understand the needs and challenges of a modern forensic science lab and ME office. Hill staffers commented that this was an extraordinary experience which "was definitely eye opening." They noted that it helped them to understand what resources are needed in the forensic science community. Our thanks to all the DCFS staff that helped host this important tour.