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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AWARDS \$3.5 MILLION TO NEW JERSEY FOR PRESIDENT'S DNA INITIATIVE AND CRIME-SOLVING FORENSIC SERVICES

TRENTON, NJ - Sarah V. Hart, Director of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the research, development and evaluation agency of the Justice Department, announced today that the Justice Department has awarded over \$1.2 million in DNA grants in New Jersey to solve crime and exonerate the innocent as part of President Bush's DNA initiative, *Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology*. An additional \$2.3 million is being awarded in New Jersey to improve criminal justice forensic services.

These are the first grants to be awarded under the President's initiative, a five-year, more than \$1 billion effort to eliminate casework and the convicted offender backlog; improve crime lab capacity; provide DNA training; provide for post-conviction DNA testing; and conduct testing to identify missing persons.

Christopher J. Christie, the U.S. Attorney for New Jersey, joined Director Hart at the event today.

"DNA is a remarkable crime-fighting tool. It allows police to solve otherwise unsolvable crimes, focus police resources on the guilty, protect the public from serious violent offenders, and exonerate the innocent before they are ever charged or convicted of a crime," said NIJ Director Hart. "Many families of murder victims and crime survivors will finally see justice done. The Justice Department is dedicated to supporting New Jersey's effort to clear its DNA backlog and enhance its forensic programs."

Today, the NIJ Director announced the following grants for New Jersey:

Total DNA Initiative Funds FY 2004 Funding Awarded: \$1,255,887

New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety: \$495,973 (DNA laboratory capacity enhancement)

New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety: \$602,463 (Forensic casework backlog reduction)

County of Union: \$157,451 (DNA laboratory capacity enhancement)

Other FY 2004 Forensics Grants Awarded: \$2,334,797

New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety: \$1,987,000 (for improving forensic services)
New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety: \$197,387 (Coverdell formula grant)
Ocean County Sheriff Department: \$70,177 (Coverdell discretionary grant)
County of Middlesex: \$80,233 (Coverdell discretionary grant)
Total FY 2004 DNA and Forensics Grants: \$3,590,684

Throughout the country there is a large backlog of unanalyzed DNA samples, which can significantly delay criminal investigations. According to a study funded by the Justice Department, there are 542,700 DNA records waiting to be tested.

Last week, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced the total funding for the President's DNA initiative is nearly \$95 million. The initiative aims to reduce the DNA analysis backlog and allow law enforcement agencies to use DNA evidence promptly as a routine law enforcement tool. The Justice Department has awarded the grants directly to the local jurisdictions, which usually have the greatest DNA backlog. The grants will be administered by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the research, development and evaluation component of the Justice Department.

Nationwide, NIJ awarded \$38 million for DNA casework; \$28 million for DNA capacity building for crime lab improvement; \$4.7 million for DNA training; \$7.9 million for DNA research and development; \$1.9 million for DNA testing for missing persons; and \$14 million for convicted offender testing. In addition, NIJ will spend \$9.5 million for Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants, over \$2.3 million for general forensics research and development; and provide \$42 million in additional crime lab improvement funds. This funding represents the largest amount of money provided by DOJ to support state and local forensic efforts.

DNA is deoxyribonucleic acid, the material of chromosomes, which identifies a person's unique genetic makeup. Databases of convicted offenders' DNA help provide law enforcement with leads in unsolved cases in which a suspect's blood, semen, saliva, or hair was left behind. Newer DNA analysis techniques can yield results from biological evidence invisible to the naked eye, even when the evidence is contaminated. Police departments throughout the country are reexamining unsolved rape and homicide cases using advanced methods of detecting identifiable DNA. Newly processed DNA profiles are uploaded into the FBI database, CODIS, so the data can be compared with evidence in the national system. Matches are reported to law enforcement and then verified by obtaining and analyzing a second sample from the suspect.

More information about DNA technology is available at www.dna.gov, a comprehensive one-stop information source for funding information, training, publications, and other resources.

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