



OREGON INNOCENCE PROJECT RESPONSE TO NON-RENEWAL OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON FORENSIC SCIENCE

April 11th, 2017

PORTLAND, Ore. – “Oregon Innocence Project is troubled by US Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ decision not to renew the National Commission on Forensic Science. The Commission has been providing an independent review of the use of forensic science in the criminal justice system. It is evident from the numerous well-documented instances of problems in forensic science labs and the use of science in courtrooms across the country that this type of review is sorely needed.

We agree with Deschutes County District Attorney John Hummel that prosecutors and defense attorneys must be able “to rely on scientific evidence that is valid as opposed to voodoo.”

Here in Oregon, in recent years, we have experienced a series of issues at our public crime labs, most egregiously when more than 2,500 cases had to be reviewed due to evidence tampering and theft by an analyst at the Bend crime lab. Addressing and preventing these problems relies in part on the standards and training that filter down to the state level from the federal government and national agencies. Half of the 16 cases of wrongfully convicted Oregonians recorded by the National Registry of Exonerations involved false or misleading forensic evidence. Sessions’ decision to suspend the review of past testimony and the creation of standards for the use of forensic science increases the risk of wrongful conviction for all Oregonians.”

Statement to be attributed to Steve Wax, Legal Director, Oregon Innocence Project.

Please contact Alice Lundell, Director of Communication, for further information or interviews.

Oregon Innocence Project is administered by the Oregon Justice Resource Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Portland, Oregon.