

MOTION OF THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Motion requesting that the County Council Committee on Public Safety investigate the critical backlog of evidence waiting for analysis in the Allegheny County Crime Lab in order to provide recommendations to the Full Council on how this public safety issue may best be addressed.

WHEREAS, the Forensic Laboratory Division of the Coroner's office has thirty-five professionals analyzing evidence for 2,300 police officers in Allegheny County, including the City of Pittsburgh, utilizing a limited budget of \$1.5 million; and,

WHEREAS, although the County will be erecting a new building to house the laboratories to address the issue of crowding and poor working conditions within the Coroner's Office, the issues of staffing, backlog and budget remain; and,

WHEREAS, the laboratory remains understaffed in spite of increasing efficiencies and productivity causing forensic evidence to sit on shelves and DNA evidence to remain frozen and untouched because qualified resources are not available to analyze it; and,

WHEREAS, the addition of 2 grant-funded drug chemistry analyst reduced the drug chemistry backlog from 1,500 cases to 425, and the eventual loss of both positions will cause the backlog to increase again; and

WHEREAS, similar understaffing in the Latent Fingerprint Section has resulted in restricting the submission of vandalism, theft and theft from auto cases to those that exceed \$5,000 in value in order to dedicate limited resources toward major cases involving homicide, rape, burglary and armed robbery; and,

WHEREAS, requests for DNA analysis of evidence have increased with analyses being performed on more cases and with greater urgency but the staffing and resources of this unit have not been increased since the late 1980's because of budget constraints resulting in a backlog of 91 current cases and more than 200 backlog cases; and,

WHEREAS, while the Firearms and Toolmark Section has obtained instrumentation that has contributed to solving crimes and identifying firearms and toolmarks that were used in the commission of crimes, the unit remains understaffed by one analyst causing a backlog of close to 700 cases; and,

WHEREAS, decisions of allocating resources to help solve and prosecute the most serious crimes come at the expense of lesser crimes or no suspect crimes being shelved, and the laboratory can and should be more pro-active in providing forensic testing to assist investigation and ultimately the justice system for the proper disposition of cases; and

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS MOVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY,

That Council's Public Safety Committee shall investigate the extent of the backlog of evidence waiting for analysis in the Allegheny County Crime Lab; and,


BE IT FURTHER MOVED,

That the Public Safety Committee shall meet with the intent to make recommendations to the Full Council on how best to address this public safety issue.

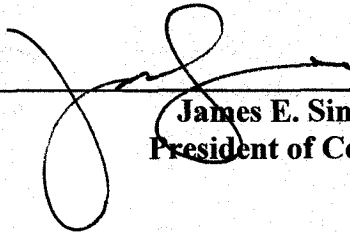
SPONSORED BY COUNCIL MEMBER RICH FITZGERALD

In Council August 22, 2002, Read and Approved.

Attest:



John Mascio
Chief Clerk of Council



James E. Simms
President of Council

Mascio, John

From: Mascio, John
Sent: Wednesday, August 28, 2002 11:34 AM
To: # Coroners
Subject: Bill No. 0837-02 Regarding Crime Lab

Attached is a copy of Allegheny County Council Bill No. 0837 -02, a Motion of Council sponsored by Council Member Rich Fitzgerald, which passed unanimously in Allegheny County Council on August 22, 2002.

As you will read, the bill is a Motion requesting that the County Council Committee on Public Safety investigate the critical backlog of evidence waiting for analysis in the Allegheny County Crime Lab in order to provide recommendations to the Full Council on how this public safety issue may best be addressed.

Your attention to this motion is requested.

Sincerely,

John Mascio
Chief Clerk
Allegheny County Council



0837-02 Motion for
Crime Lab.d...