



ILLINOIS STATE POLICE

NEWS RELEASE

Brendan F. Kelly - Director

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ILLINOIS STATE POLICE FORENSIC SERVICES IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUE AS NEW COMMISSION MEETS FOR THE FIRST TIME

ISP Reduces Total Forensic Backlog by 72% in Two Years

PESOTUM – Illinois State Police (ISP) Director Brendan F. Kelly today kicked off the first meeting of the Forensic Science Commission (Commission) charged with ensuring the efficient delivery of forensic science to help ensure swift justice for victims as well as to exonerate the wrongly accused. The Commission builds on the work ISP has done over the past several years to improve forensic services, including reducing the total forensic backlog by 72% in two years.

“As governor, I’ve been proud to champion new investments to solve crimes and advance justice for victims, survivors, and their families — including reducing the long-standing DNA backlog and funding the new forensics facility in Decatur,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “The Forensic Science Commission has been an indispensable tool in our fight to solve crimes and pursue justice, and I’m proud to bring these experts together to further improve our state systems.”

“The Illinois State Police Division of Forensic Services has made tremendous improvements over the past several years resulting in reduced turnaround times for processing evidence and quicker justice for victims of crime,” **said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly**. “The Illinois Forensic Science Commission can help guide the future of forensic science in Illinois by identifying efficiencies, new technologies and methodologies, improving communications among stakeholders, and analyzing current policies and practices that impact the use of forensic evidence in the courts.”

The Commission will review all aspects and sound practices of forensic services with the goal of reducing or eliminating inefficiencies that contribute to backlogs and errors, and focus on education, training, funding, and hiring.

Recent improvements to the ISP Division of Forensic Services (DFS) included hiring additional forensic scientists, utilization of robotics, and implementation of new technology that allowed DFS to go paperless, which helped reduce the turnaround time for processing evidence. Over the past two years, ISP has reduced its total forensic backlog by approximately 72%.

From February 2019 to the end of 2021, backlogs across DFS decreased significantly. Specifically, reductions achieved include:

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- 52% firearms/toolmarks
- 56% toxicology
- 60% biology/DNA
- 62% trace chemistry (e.g. gunshot residue)
- 83% latent prints
- 89% drug chemistry
- 97% sexual assault evidence older than six months

“On behalf of sexual assault survivors across the state, the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) applauds the progress the Illinois State Police has made reducing the backlog of sexual assault evidence collection kits awaiting forensic analysis,” said ICASA Chief Executive Officer and Commission member Carrie Ward. “There have been significant steps forward in improving the efficiency of the analysis process. We appreciate the continued steps ISP and Director Kelly have taken to improve the system for survivors. ICASA looks forward to the eventual elimination of the backlog of untested kits, demonstrating these cases are being investigated and processed in the timely and efficient manner that survivors deserve.”

The Commission will also collect and analyze information, as well as evaluate the impact of current laws, rules, policies, and practices on forensic crime laboratories.

“I am proud of the fact that our state has enacted legislation to create this Forensic Science Commission, as the work of the Commission will seek to enhance justice for both victims and defendants alike,” said Illinois Innocence Project retired Executive Director and Commission member John J. Hanlon. “As an attorney whose work has often involved trying to remedy cases of wrongful convictions of the innocent, I know that countless innocent individuals have been sent to prison based on “junk science”, i.e. forensic evidence which lacks proper scientific underpinnings. Improvements are also needed in the area of preservation of evidence with circuit clerks and law enforcement agencies in Illinois cities and counties. I look forward to working with the members of the Commission toward understandings and meaningful improvements in these areas and others.”

ISP launched a publicly available web-based dashboard to provide information on processing times and backlogs, which is available on the [ISP Forensics Reports website](#). ISP has also implemented an online [Sexual Assault Tracking](#) system that allows survivors of sexual assault to monitor their evidence online throughout the entire process, from collection at the hospital, through law enforcement pick-up and submission to the forensic lab, and lastly to the State’s Attorney’s office where final results are received.

The mission of the ISP DFS is to deliver complete, accurate, and timely crime scene evidence collection and forensic analysis to every law enforcement agency within the state. With the six current laboratories and nearly 500 forensic services personnel, DFS completed more than 70,000 forensic assignments in 2021.

Made possible by \$76.6 million from Rebuild Illinois, ISP is building a new combined crime laboratory and administrative facility in Joliet. The current Joliet Forensic Science Laboratory, built in 1964, is responsible for work products that directly affect the criminal justice system and services more than 200 law enforcement agencies. Additionally, ISP will be opening another lab in Decatur.

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