

Sep 8th Meeting of Illinois Laboratory Advisory Committee Springfield

The meeting was chaired by John Collins of the DuPage County Sheriffs Office .John is in his second ,and he hopes, final year as ILAC chairman.Other members included Donna Metzger of the Illinois State Police and officials from the departments of public health ,the Illinois Emergency Management Agency ,medical schools and the Cook County States Attorneys Office.

Minutes

1. Mr. Collins began by noting that ILAC had been created by the General Assembly to oversee state forensic facilities.He went on to lament that their ability to provide that oversight had been severely “watered down” by a lack of resources and support. He described the committee as struggling for a means to have an impact.It is his impression that ILACs “ founding fathers ” in the legislature have lost interest.
2. Letters have been sent to the governor,the Illinois Supreme Court and Sen. Cullerton among others .No feedback had come from any source except Tom Sullivan and Jennifer Bishop of our committee.
- 3.The general concern of the chair and members was that serious problems do exist in the infrastructure of labs in our state .There are outmoded facilities and old equipment .The members believe that a crisis will result if these matters are not addressed.
- 4.A discussion of strategy centered on the need for an advocate in the legislature .The Attorney General has apparently been of no help nor has the Legislative Reference Bureau.It was noted that the Tribune had done at least one editorial on the importance of ILAC.
5. Members expressed views regarding the dangers of taking a political position to achieve some impact. The point was made that public criticism of specific labs or forensic work in general might be seized on by one side or another in a legal proceeding. There was a brief discussion of the issue of accreditation with the recognition that non-accredited labs are still seen as a source of important evidence by litigators.
6. I expressed the CPRSC’s sympathy with ILACs perceived lack of interest and support on the part of the governor and general assembly. The members were grateful for our support and Mr. Collins hopes to meet with Jennifer and attend our next meeting. I was asked some questions about the number of DNA exonerations in capital cases.
7. I inquired about the salary disparities that had been brought to our attention earlier this year. Ms. Metzger reported that while CMS had made no progress on the salary structures in general, the representation by AFSCME of some state police personnel had produced improvements for Senior Public Service Administrators who had been paid less than the workers they supervise. Some personnel had also benefitted from representation by the Teamsters.
- 8.John Collins stated their goal for next year is to complete a “white paper” on lab infrastructure to present to the Capital Development Board .He is concerned with their resources to gather data and do adequate surveys .He hopes they can benefit from working with us in some areas.