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TAINTED BLOOD: LETTER Editorial on Arkansas Crime Lab Incompetence

Posted by Jim Robinson
Posted on 2/23/2004, 1:11:00 PM by Jim Robinson
Posted in: Crime Lab Needs Help
Posted in: Free Republic Forum
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In Memory of Dick Kempf

M.D. Arkansas Times Editorial 02/19/04

Crime Lab needs help

Parley Gaster The Arkansas State Crime Laboratory, which is supposed to provide forensic evidence for police and prosecutors, has been in a state of chaos and disarray for years. Its Director, Dick Kempf, has been fired, and the Legislative Audit Committee has ordered a complete audit of the lab.

Our Opinion: The state needs to allocate the resources necessary to make the Arkansas State Crime Laboratory a model of efficiency and very good confidence.

The scientists and technicians of the state lab, who do work that is critical to the criminal justice system, have been hampered repeatedly and long overdue Arkansas. Unfortunately, our state has been slow to provide the resources that are necessary to make the lab a model of efficiency.

Kempf, who was fired Dec. 30, by the Arkansas State Crime Laboratory Board, was accused by the board of gross mismanagement and of failing to provide the board with information it needed to make sound decisions. The board also accused Kempf of failing to provide information to the state Legislature and to the state Legislative Audit Committee.

Kempf, who was a forensic pathologist, was hired by the board in 1999 to run the state crime laboratory. Kempf was fired by the board after it had received a report from the state Legislative Audit Committee that contained a list of the lab's problems.

The board fired not only Kempf, but also certain employees who were responsible for the lab's problems, including the lab's chief financial officer, who was fired for failing to provide information to the board and for failing to provide information to the state Legislative Audit Committee. The lab's director, Kim Dickinson, who was fired for failing to provide information to the board, was also fired for failing to provide information to the state Legislative Audit Committee. The lab's chief forensic scientist was fired for failing to provide information to the board and for failure to supervise a crime lab employee who was fired for failure to perform her duties.

Gaster's report contained a list of problems at the crime lab, including:

The amount of evidence accumulated at the crime lab, especially in the area of DNA evidence, has been so great that the crime laboratory was unable to hire and train enough qualified technicians to keep up with the demand. The result has been a backlog of evidence that has created a crisis for the criminal justice system in the state.

The crime lab has accumulated a backlog of evidence that has created a crisis for the criminal justice system in the state. The lab has been unable to keep up with the demand for its services. Chief Medical Examiner Fabian Fabian, who is a forensic pathologist, has been forced to perform autopsies and other duties that are not his particular discipline by the policy of the agency.

The state crime laboratory has been unable to keep up with the demand for its services in the area of DNA evidence. The state has been unable to hire and train enough qualified technicians to keep up with the demand. The result is a backlog of evidence that has created a crisis for the criminal justice system in the state.

The state's crime laboratory has been unable to keep up with the demand for its services in the area of DNA evidence. The state has been unable to hire and train enough qualified technicians to keep up with the demand. The result is a backlog of evidence that has created a crisis for the criminal justice system in the state.

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