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**Heller, Cornyn, Feinstein, Klobuchar Introduce the Debbie Smith Crime Victims Protection Act**

**WASHINGTON** - U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV), John Cornyn (R-TX), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced the Debbie Smith Crime Victims Protection Act,legislation to reauthorize the Debbie Smith Actand dedicate much-needed resources to state and local law enforcement agencies to conduct forensic analyses of crime scenes, including untested rape kits.

The Debbie Smith Crime Victims Protection Act reauthorizes the Debbie Smith Act to continue the testing of DNA evidence, including rape kits, from unsolved crimes nationwide, DNA training and education for law enforcement, correctional personnel, and court officers, and the Sexual Assault Forensic Exam Program, which supports forensic nurse training throughout the country.

“The Debbie Smith Act ensures that critical funding flows to states and localities to reduce the backlog of DNA evidence,” **said Sen. Heller.** “I am proud to partner with Senators Cornyn, Feinstein, and Klobuchar to continue my work to reduce the rape kit backlog. I look forward to seeing this bill signed into law to continue this important program, which brings justice to victims, ensures that criminals are punished for their heinous crimes, and exonerates the innocent.”

“This landmark legislation has provided more than a decade of support for survivors, serving as a critical tool in the fight to end backlogs of untested kits in cities across America,” **said Sen. Cornyn.** “Reauthorizing these programs will ensure labs can continue to complete DNA analysis on evidence and exonerate those who are wrongly accused. It’s survivors like Debbie Smith who inspire us to keep working to ensure our criminal justice system never forgets that there is a victim at the heart of these crimes.”

“As a former prosecutor, I know that behind every unprocessed rape kit is a victim of sexual assault wondering if they will ever see justice. This bill will help our law enforcement officers continue to process untested rape kits and other DNA evidence, find answers to unsolved crimes, and put criminals behind bars,” **said Sen. Klobuchar**.

“Since the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program was created in 2004, it has enabled states to process more than 725,000 cases and upload more than 327,000 DNA profiles into the FBI’s Combined DNA Index System. These grants were responsible for 41 percent of all rape kit matches made in the CODIS system,” **said Sen. Feinstein.** “This program is extraordinarily important for rape survivors seeking justice, and I am proud to support this bill and will work with my colleagues to get it enacted as soon as possible.”

**Background on the Debbie Smith Act:**

The Debbie Smith Act was originally signed into law in 2004 to provide local and state crime laboratories resources to end the backlog of untested DNA evidence from unsolved crimes, analyze DNA samples, and increase the capacity to process DNA in order to guard against future backlogs. Since it became law, more than 641,000 DNA cases have been processed. In addition to crime scene evidence, Debbie Smith funds are also utilized to process offender DNA samples to ensure evidence from unsolved crimes can be matched against a database of known offenders, similar to the criminal fingerprint databases.

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