



Office of
Jason Crowell State Senator
The Crowell Connection

Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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\$625,000 For SEMO Crime Lab

The Southeast regional crime lab on the campus of Southeast Missouri State University has been a vital resource for our law enforcement community since 1969 when it first opened. For the past several years, the crime lab has processed nearly 3,000 cases annually. Because it is important to sustain this entity, this past session I joined efforts with Sen. Rob Mayer of Dexter, Speaker Rod Jetton, Representatives Nathan Cooper, Scott



Lipke, Peter Myers, Lanie Black, Steve Tilley and Billy Pat Wright to secure state funding for its continued existence.

The crime lab has been funded through governmental grant programs and certain fees collected through local agencies. Staff members of the university crime lab, as is the case with any lab, are now required to go through an accreditation process for all of the areas in which they perform testing. Without accreditation, test results cannot be admitted into court proceedings.

Because the SEMO crime lab provided testing for drugs, ballistics examinations, blood/body fluids, serology, trace evidence, arson, fingerprints, alcohol in blood, urine

toxicology and DNA, the accreditation process is extremely expensive. That high cost, combined with the price of equipment and salaries for highly qualified staff, made it harder and harder for the SEMO crime lab to remain a stand-alone entity.

To increase efficiency and guarantee the lab's vitality for years to come, we pursued a merger with the Missouri State Highway Patrol Lab this year. By folding the SEMO crime lab into the highway patrol, the lab will be able to specialize in particular areas of evidence testing, such as controlled substances, and still maintain its presence as a full-service crime lab.

Together, this session, we succeeded in getting nearly \$625,000 appropriated to cover the costs of the merger, which took effect on July 1, the first day of the 2007 fiscal year. The money went toward the campus-facility lease and testing materials, as well as salary and benefit adjustments for the staff, which will now be employed by the state.

With the assistance of Sen. Kit Bond, Sen. Jim Talent and Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson the SEMO crime lab recently moved to a new location and currently operates in a modern, state-of-the-art facility. Now, with the merger, the lab will see even more improvements, such as a bridge in communication, organization and administration gaps that had frequently hindered a quick and smooth caseload turnaround.

Crime labs exist so that collected evidence can be interpreted and justice can be served. The test results in an investigation mean the difference between a suspect walking free or spending years behind bars. This is why accuracy and steadfast reliability are essential to the productivity and effectiveness of crime labs, and this is why the recent procurement of state funding, making our area crime lab a more efficient system is so important. The long-term effects of this merger are far-reaching and undeniably beneficial to Southeast Missouri.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>.

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