



State Senator

**Norma Champion**

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## Sen. Norma Champion's Crime Lab Accreditation Bill Clears General Assembly *SB 733 Awaits Governor's Signature*

JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri will soon be the fourth state to require any crime lab that provides reports or testimony to state courts to be accredited, ensuring the quality of crime labs and the evidence they produce.

After crime lab quality was called into question in Texas and Oklahoma, a large amount of cases were thrown out of courts in both states because of compromised evidence. Eventually, the states enacted similar accreditation standards. When attention was drawn to the issue, New York became the third state to require accreditation. [Senate Bill 733](#) makes Missouri the fourth state to take proactive measures to avoid similar situations where evidence is rendered unusable.

“It’s crucial to have the ability to demonstrate to the courts and the general public that our crime labs meet certain standards,” Sen. Champion said. “When people’s lives are hanging in the balance, judges and juries cannot afford to base their decisions on faulty evidence.”

The measure provides independent oversight of Missouri’s crime labs by allowing them to be evaluated by a state-approved laboratory accrediting organization. All Missouri crime labs must meet the accreditation requirement by 2012.

“Senator Champion has been an extremely strong supporter of law enforcement in general and crime labs in particular,” said Bill Marbaker, assistant director of the Missouri State Highway Patrol’s Crime Laboratory Division. “It’s important to be proactive and not reactive to ensure the high quality of our crime labs. We are very grateful to the senator, the entire General Assembly and the governor for making this legislation a priority.”

Marbaker says that most crime labs in Missouri are already accredited or moving toward accreditation, but this bill provides a “kick in the pants” to those that haven’t gone through the process.

Sen. Champion has been active in promoting the expansion of and securing funding for the new crime lab facility in Springfield, which allows local prosecutors to work with local forensic experts rather than traveling to other labs or hiring outside lab workers.

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