County of Los Angeles
Sheriff's Department Headquarters
4700 Ramona Boulevard
Monterey Park, California 91754-2169

LEROY D. BACA, SHERIFF

June 29, 2004

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

AUTHORIZE SUBMISSION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE FOR THE PAUL COVERDELL FORENSIC SCIENCE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM (ALL DISTRICTS) (3 VOTES)

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:

1. Authorize the Sheriff to submit a grant application on behalf of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Scientific Services Bureau to the United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in response to the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program solicitation. Under this program, the Department is eligible to receive a maximum of $80,000 in federal grant funding, which will initiate measures that will result in improvements in current operations. Should the Department be successful in our pursuit of this funding opportunity, no matching funds will be required of the County.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

On May 28, 2004, the NIJ announced the availability of funding under the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program. Under this grant program, awarded agencies and local jurisdictions are expected to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science and medical examiner services. More specifically, award recipients should experience a decrease in the number of days

between submission of a sample to a forensic laboratory and the delivery of test results. Additionally, award recipients should experience increases in the number of samples used for criminal justice purposes and in the number of samples used in forensic science and medical examiner services.

In achieving the goals and expectations of the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program, the Department may use the federal grant award to fund costs associated with personnel, computerization, laboratory equipment, supplies, accreditation, education, training, certification, and facility renovation/construction. As mentioned above, the achievement of these milestones will result in improvements in the quality and timeliness of forensic science and medical examiner services.

In order to accomplish the goals and expectations of the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program, the Department will propose to improve the timeliness of crime scene investigations by replacing a portion of the Department's current 35 millimeter (35 mm) film based photographic process with digital photography. This modified process will reduce the amount of time that the investigator must wait to review photographs, allow crime scene examiners to instantaneously review the photographs' exposure, content, and focus, as well as provide a semi-automated means to create and distribute the photographs. Additionally, the presence of digital photographs will allow Department personnel to transfer the photographs to a secure server where they could be maintained as "read only" files. This would prevent alterations, allow for the proper maintenance of the chain of custody, and provide remote access to approved personnel at anytime.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program supports each of the four (4) goals within the County of Los Angeles' Strategic Plan. Specifically, with the support of this potential funding source, the Department will be able to realize the achievement of Goal #1: Service Excellence, Goal #2: Workforce Excellence, Goal #3: Organizational Effectiveness, and Goal #4: Fiscal Responsibility. With the grant funds being directed towards assisting the Department in improving the timeliness and efficiency with which crime scenes are assessed and investigated, the Department will be given the opportunity to complete its tasks, duties, and responsibilities more effectively and efficiently. In addition, the safety and security of the residents of Los Angeles County will be maintained and improved.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program is for a term of 12 months. Under this program, the Department is eligible to receive a maximum of $80,000 in federal grant funds. Additionally, no matching funds are required from Los Angeles County during the term of this grant program.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

This Board letter has been reviewed and approved as to form by County Counsel and the affected departments.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Should the Department ultimately be awarded these funds, the expected impact may come in the form of workload increases for the County's justice departments. The potential supplemental workload will be the result of increases in the number of defendants charged with crimes due to more efficient crime scene investigations. In the event these workload increases come to fruition, the affected departments will include the District Attorney, Public Defender, and the Alternate Public Defender. Prior to seeking your Board's authorization to accept the grant award, the Sheriff's Department will make contact with the affected departments.

CONCLUSION

Upon approval by your Board, the Department respectfully requests that your Board provide four (4) individually adopted copies of this action to the Department. The Department's contacts for this requested Board action are Karen J. Anderson, Grants Manager, at (323) 526-5408 or Richard F. Martinez, Grants Coordinator, at (323) 526-5299.

Respectfully submitted,

Lee Baca

LEROY D. BACA
SHERIFF