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Nov 17, 2011

Gov. Jindal Announces Elimination of DNA Backlog, DNA Unit Now Operating in Real Time

BATON ROUGE – Today, Governor Bobby Jindal announced that the Louisiana State Police Crime Laboratory has now eliminated the crime lab's long-held DNA case backlog and the DNA unit is now operating in real-time to assist law enforcement agencies across the state in tracking down criminals. Governor Jindal said that to eliminate the backlog, the crime lab instituted a reduction plan that adopted management practices often found in the private sector that increases production and in 2009, the Governor marked the expansion of the lab by adding 23,500 square feet of space for increased DNA analysis.

In 2009, the DNA unit averaged a year or more to provide a case report and now a case report is provided within an average of 20 days, which is a 93 percent reduction in processing time. On a yearly basis, the DNA unit has increased their completion rate by five-fold. In 2009, the DNA unit reported 310 forensic DNA cases and in 2011 they have reported over 1,600 cases to date.

Governor Jindal said, "The bottom line is that our crime lab is now operating in real time and faster than ever so that we can quickly track down criminals and prosecute them to the fullest extent. This should be a warning to all criminals and people thinking about committing a crime in Louisiana. We will catch you and we will bring you to justice. With the tireless work of our crime lab, you will not escape and get away with committing a crime in Louisiana."

When Governor Jindal entered office, the DNA backlog stood at 1,200 cases. In 2009, the rate of case requests being submitted to the crime lab continued to exceed the laboratory's capacity to report cases and to provide real-time support during the initial investigational phase of a case. The lab saw a 41 percent increase from 2008 to 2009 in the number of DNA requests submitted. The lab was not able to keep up with the increasing rate of requests, and the DNA unit's backlog stood at over 1,400 DNA cases in 2009.

The reduction plan was implemented in 2009 and focused on four areas, including maximizing additional staff and outsourcing capabilities, collaborating and partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, making technological improvements, and removing duplication and increasing efficiencies.

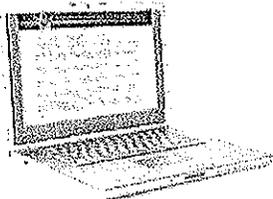
Governor Jindal also noted that the State Police Crime Lab has eliminated or reduced the backlog in their other forensic units. The narcotics unit has eliminated its backlog from 2,400 cases with a case report provided in an average of 18 days. The backlog for ballistics cases has been reduced from 711 cases at the end of 2008 to just 30 cases, and the number of firearms examiners has doubled. In the toxicology unit, the backlog has been reduced by 90 percent with a case report provided in an average of 14 days.

The Governor highlighted how the crime lab is partnering with local law enforcement agencies to help them fight crime.

"Just under four years ago, we made a commitment to significantly reduce the case backlog at the Louisiana State Police Crime Lab. It was an important initiative for the Lab, its employees,

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its customers, the citizens, but more importantly, for the victims." said Colonel Mike Edmonson, State Police Superintendent. "The DNA Section at the Lab deployed an efficiency project in an effort to reduce the backlog of DNA cases. The Governor also ensured the expansion of the DNA Lab to improve capabilities and resources. Through these efforts, the State Police Crime Lab - DNA Section is now providing real-time support to investigative agencies in Louisiana, a remarkable accomplishment."

East Baton Rouge Sheriff Sid Gautreaux said, "The State Police Crime Lab is an integral part of local law enforcement. It allows our detectives to collect the evidence they need in order to make timely arrests and get dangerous criminals off the streets. We appreciate the support of Governor Jindal and Colonel Edmonson in making the lab so accessible and professional."

West Baton Rouge Sheriff Mike Cazes said, "The West Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office was happy to be a part of the Crime Lab Reduction Plan by placing two analysts in the Lab to assist on a full-time basis. I am thrilled with their accomplishments and appreciative of the support of Governor Jindal and Colonel Edmonson."

Baton Rouge Police Chief Dewayne White said, "The State Police Crime Lab plays a vital role in helping us solve crimes every day, especially those violent crimes that affect the safety of our entire community. They're among the best in the nation at what they do and we're very fortunate to have their expertise available to us here in Baton Rouge."

New Orleans Police Chief Ron Serpas said, "When NOPD asked for State Police's assistance, it was provided without hesitation. State Police experts have helped us get more than 800 backlogged sexual assault kits out of storage and into DNA testing. They also played a key role in helping us clear a highly publicized, recent murder case in the French Quarter. The NOPD, as well as the people of New Orleans, sincerely appreciate and value this partnership."

East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Hillar Moore said, "Thanks to the tireless efforts of the DNA Section of the LSP Crime Lab, no longer is there a backlog of cases awaiting DNA testing. We are fortunate to be able to have a DNA Lab, which is among our country's best, collect, examine, test and provide results very quickly, while maintaining the strictest of standards. We are very fortunate to have this lab and its dedicated professionals working for our community."

The State Police crime lab has helped the newly established East Baton Rouge Violent Crime Unit – a permanent multi-agency investigative workforce – that includes the Baton Rouge Police Department, East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office, East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and several other law enforcement agencies.

The crime lab has also helped the New Orleans Police Department fight crime in the city by assisting them with cases coming from the city's agency. The State Police Crime Lab began assisting the NOPD in 2010 with DNA analysis of violent crime, specifically for homicides and sexual assaults.

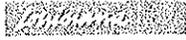
In 2010, a joint effort between Louisiana State Police, NOPD, Marshall University and the National Institute of Justice was started to test all backlogged sexual assault cases. Currently over 800 NOPD cases have been outsourced to Marshall University and half of these have been reported by Marshall and reviewed by the DNA unit at the State Police Crime Lab. Approximately 100 of these cases have generated DNA profiles that have been entered into a DNA database. There have been 38 investigative leads generated from this project.

In 2011, the State Police Crime Lab also began working with NOPD on new cases. To date, the crime lab has outsourced approximately 100 cases and analyzed 100 cases internally. The assistance has resulted in 36 investigation leads generated using the DNA database.

The crime lab is also providing the New Orleans Police Department with on-going training in regards to the utilization of DNA testing in forensic cases.

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