

PRESS RELEASE

Colorado Department of Law
Attorney General John W. Suthers

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL ANNOUNCES COLORADO'S RECEIPT OF \$1.2 MILLION
IN FEDERAL FUNDS TO START A DNA-BASED EXONERATION PROGRAM**

DENVER — Colorado Attorney General John Suthers announced today that the state of Colorado has received nearly \$1.2 million in federal grant funds to start a program that will allow some people previously convicted of felonies to apply to have DNA testing performed in their case.

“DNA is one of law enforcement’s most effective tools for convicting the guilty and exonerating the innocent,” Suthers said. “These grant funds will allow us to use DNA to ensure that no Coloradan has been wrongly convicted.”

The Office of the Attorney General will administer the DNA project with the Denver District Attorney’s Office, which has been a leader among state prosecutors’ offices in the use of biological evidence. The Office of the Attorney General intends to partner with several other organizations, including the University of Denver College of Law, the Colorado Bureau of Investigation and the Colorado Public Defender’s Office, to run the program and select cases for review.

“Prosecutors have an ethical duty to seek the truth and assure justice is done in every case,” said Denver District Attorney Mitch Morrissey, who has sought a DNA-based exoneration program for several years. “Applying state of the art DNA technology to past criminal cases fulfills this responsibility.”

The program, “The Colorado Justice Review Project,” as outlined in the Office of the Attorney General’s grant proposal, will:

- Review up to 5,000 past rapes, murders and manslaughters to identify cases where postconviction DNA testing could possibly exonerate an innocent inmate;
- Test biological evidence in roughly 1 percent of the cases where DNA evidence could exonerate innocent inmates;
- Request further judicial review in any case where the postconviction DNA analysis proves a conviction is questionable;
- Document cases that result in exoneration; and,
- Close any cases where postconviction DNA analysis indicates the conviction was accurate.

“After attending a Justice Department symposium in January about post-conviction DNA casework in helping exonerate the innocent, I felt that this project was an important initiative for Colorado,” said Colorado Bureau of Investigation Director Ron Sloan. “CBI is excited about being an active participant in this program. We will provide technical investigative assistance and forensic expertise to the Attorney General, Denver District Attorney’s office and the state’s public defender. I am hopeful that CBI’s expertise will be valuable in identifying wrongful convictions, eliminating the possibility of future wrongful convictions and enhancing our support and assistance to local law enforcement in investigating cold cases.”

The Office of the Attorney General also plans to use the program's findings to help law enforcement change its investigative techniques to reduce or eliminate future wrongful convictions. The project's findings also could form the basis for future legislation aimed at improving Colorado DNA collection, retention and testing procedures.

The Office of the Colorado State Public Defender has pledged to fully support the DNA project.