



Jurisprudence Section – 2008

E4 The AJS Institute of Forensic Science and Public Policy - Science and the Law

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After attending this presentation, attendees will: learn about multidisciplinary approaches to forensic science, learn about trends in scientific testimony, and learn about research initiatives in forensic science.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by. Issues of science and the law have reached critical levels in recent years, nowhere more so than in the forensic sciences. DNA exonerations and scientific skepticism have shaken the public trust in the criminal justice system. Recent initiatives based on multidisciplinary approaches have begun to improve the quality of forensic sciences and the capacity of lawyers and judges to deal with them.

DNA based exonerations and skeptical scientific reviews have undermined public trust in the forensic sciences specifically and in the criminal justice system generally. The American Judicature Society created the Institute of Forensic Science and Public Policy and the Commission on Forensic Science and Public Policy to bring together national leaders to address the issues and improve outcomes. The Commission, Co-Chaired by Scientist Stephen Fienberg, former Attorney General Janet Reno, and former CIA and FBI Director William Webster, is comprised of leading national scientists, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement officials, and others. Together the Institute and Commission create a multidisciplinary approach to supporting and conducting needed research and education in forensic sciences.

The presentation will cover the following areas:

1. The current work of the Institute and Commission;
2. Ongoing field studies in eyewitness identification;
3. The problems facing courts in dealing with forensic issues;
4. The problems facing forensic scientists in dealing with courts; and
5. Proposed solutions and recommended practices.

At the end of the presentation it is anticipated that attendees will have a greater understanding of the problems as seen from multiple perspectives, a better grasp of potential solutions, and greater knowledge of current initiatives.

Research, Eyewitness Identification, Multidisciplinary