

THE HOUSE MUST PASS THE DEBBIE SMITH ACT OF 2019 IMMEDIATELY

Background

The Debbie Smith Act, passed in 2004 and then reauthorized in 2008 and 2014, creates the primary program to end the backlog of untested and unanalyzed DNA evidence.

As [demonstrated](#) by the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), DNA evidence is often critical for achieving justice in crimes of sexual violence, but there are still challenges in the way it's used to hold perpetrators accountable. **The backlog of unanalyzed DNA evidence, often referred to as the rape kit backlog, is a major impediment to prosecuting perpetrators of sexual assault.** The backlog includes evidence never sent to a lab for testing, often called the "hidden backlog," as well as evidence that arrived at a crime lab but was never tested. The Debbie Smith Act, named after a survivor who eventually found justice through DNA evidence, was the nation's first piece of legislation aimed at ending the backlog.

The Debbie Smith Act **provides funding** for crime labs to process DNA evidence, **requires that states create plans for the reduction of the backlog**, and **helps to strengthen the national DNA database** used to help solve crimes.

The Debbie Smith Act is the [largest](#) federal effort to eliminate the rape kit and DNA backlog. Since 2011 there has been an **85% increase** in demand for testing. This increased demand places a heavy burden on state and local crime labs. According to the FBI, as of [July 2019](#), CODIS (the FBI's DNA database system) has produced **over 475,803 hits**, assisting in **more than 465,270 investigations**. According to the National Institute of Justice **42% of CODIS hits** are the direct result of Debbie Smith Act funding.

The Debbie Smith Act authorizes Congress to allocate **\$151 million dollars annually** to state and local labs for DNA and rape kit testing. The law will expire on September 30 unless the House of Representatives votes to reauthorize it.

Why the House Must Pass S. 820:

The bipartisan Debbie Smith Act of 2019 ([S.820](#)), which would reauthorize the Debbie Smith Act through 2024, was introduced by Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and passed the Senate by Unanimous Consent in May of 2019. However, instead of passing this important reauthorization, House Democrats attached the reauthorization to the controversial and partisan Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019 ([H.R.1585](#)), which [passed](#) the House in April, but won't be taken up in the Senate. Due to this, the House must pass the bipartisan Debbie Smith Act of 2019 before funding expires on September 30th, 2019.

