

Monday, February 05, 2007

U.S. Set to Begin a Vast Expansion of DNA Sampling



The Justice Department is completing rules to allow the collection of DNA from most people arrested or detained by federal authorities, a vast expansion of DNA gathering that will include hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants, by far the largest group affected.

The new forensic DNA sampling was authorized by Congress in a little-noticed amendment to a January 2006 renewal of the Violence Against Women Act, which provides protections and assistance for victims of sexual crimes. The amendment permits DNA collecting from anyone under criminal arrest by federal authorities, and also from illegal immigrants detained by federal agents.

Over the last year, the Justice Department has been conducting an internal review and consulting with other agencies to prepare regulations to carry out the law.

The goal, justice officials said, is to make the practice of DNA sampling as routine as fingerprinting for anyone detained by federal agents, including illegal immigrants. Until now, federal authorities have taken DNA samples only from convicted felons.

The law has strong support from crime victims' organizations and some women's groups, who say it will help law enforcement identify sexual predators and also detect dangerous criminals among illegal immigrants.

"Obviously, the bigger the DNA database, the better," said Lynn Parrish, the spokeswoman for the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, based in Washington. "If this had been implemented years ago, it could have prevented many crimes. Rapists are generalists. They don't just rape, they also murder."


Peter Neufeld, a lawyer who is a co-director of the Innocence Project, which has exonerated dozens of prison inmates using DNA evidence, said the government was overreaching by seeking to apply DNA sampling as universally as fingerprinting.

"Whereas fingerprints merely identify the person who left them," Mr. Neufeld said, "DNA profiles have the potential to reveal our physical diseases and mental disorders. It becomes intrusive when the government begins to mine our most intimate matters."

Immigration lawyers said they did not learn of the measure when it passed last year and were dismayed by its sweeping scope.

"This has taken us by storm," said Deborah Notkin, a lawyer who was president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association last year. "It's so broad, it's scary. It is a terrible thing to do because people are sometimes detained erroneously in the immigration system."

[More here](#)

Posted by Stewart Rhodes at 4:26 PM 

Labels: [Police Abuse](#), [Police State](#), [politics](#), [Terrorism](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

[Subscribe to: Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

