

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2404

March 13th, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman, Committee on
Appropriations
The U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, Committee on
Appropriations
The U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

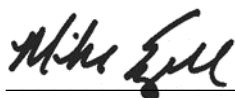
I am requesting funding for the Advancing Rural Digital Forensics Initiative project in fiscal year 2027. The entity to receive funding for this project is the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) located at 118 College Dr. The funding would be used to expand the capabilities of the Rural Digital Forensics Initiative (RDFI), a program that has rapidly gained adoption for improving law enforcement training in digital forensics across the United States.

The project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds because this project will strengthen the ability of law enforcement agencies, particularly in rural communities—to investigate digital crimes and properly identify, preserve, and analyze digital evidence. The University of Southern Mississippi's Rural Digital Forensics Initiative (RDFI) has already established a digital forensics laboratory and media production studio dedicated to developing training programs for law enforcement personnel. The requested funding will expand laboratory capabilities, develop advanced digital forensics training, deploy a mobile production system to reach law enforcement agencies nationwide, and support high-quality training and certification programs.

The project has a federal nexus because the funding provided is consistent with purposes authorized in Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) program, section 501 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. § 10152).

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,



Mike Ezell
Member of Congress