United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2016

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

We write respectfully to request that Public Law Number 110-34, the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act, receive full funding in the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations bill.

Thank you for your original support of the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act when it was considered by Congress. This bill passed the House by a vote of 422-2, was unanimously adopted by the Senate, and was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2008. Unfortunately, despite strong bipartisan and bicameral support, the historic law has never been fully funded.

The Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act authorizes an aggressive 10-year strategy to investigate and prosecute outstanding Civil Rights era crimes. Currently, the FBI and the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice are responsible for all criminal Civil Rights cases from that era, as well as current investigations and prosecutions. The law also strengthened federal coordination with State and local law enforcement officials. Strong funding would provide the Department of Justice with the resources needed to embark on the structured, aggressive, comprehensive effort that is the aim of the law.

For many years, no specific resources have been appropriated to solve these outstanding crimes and bring healing, truth, and peace to the affected families, friends, communities, and our nation as a whole. The requested funding would provide the Department of Justice with the full resources needed to embark on the structured, aggressive, comprehensive effort that is the aim of the law.

We hope that this funding will bring us much closer to delivering the long-awaited justice and closure for victims' families, friends, and communities. Even if several decades have passed since these heinous crimes were committed, it is imperative that the murderers are held accountable. Time is of the essence; Congress must again do our part in ensuring that this landmark legislation is fully funded so that its intent can finally be realized.

Again, we greatly appreciate your past support of the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Richard Burr

Patrick Leahy

Cc: Chairman Thad Cochran and Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski