

## **Operational & Advocacy Issues Effecting Commercial Laboratories**

### **Third Party NELAP Accreditation, the time has arrived**

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Conformity assessment (i.e., inspection and certification) carried out by third-party private sector organizations is well established and recognized by several federal agencies. Allowing third party private accrediting bodies (AB's) to provide National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) accreditation services in support, or in place of state AB's appears critical to the maintenance, if not the survival of NELAP. Long-standing government policy supports the use of private sector accreditation infrastructure for many professions. The infrastructure in the form of the multilateral mutual recognition arrangements of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC)([www.ilac.org](http://www.ilac.org)) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) ([www.iaf.nu](http://www.iaf.nu)) and The NELAC Institute ([www.nelac-institute.org](http://www.nelac-institute.org)) are already in place for recognizing private AB's performing NELAP assessments. ACIL, the trade association for commercial laboratories ([www.acil.org](http://www.acil.org)) takes the position that there is little, if any, need for federal or state agencies to administer their own programs or systems for NELAP laboratory accreditation, either for themselves or for recognition of AB's.

Washington's experience with NELAP Third Party Accreditation (TPA) and the impending implementation of TPA NELAP accreditations for laboratories in NJ and FL will be discussed along with the advantages of implementing TPA to improve CA's troubled public environmental laboratory accreditation authority. TPA allows private accrediting bodies, (e.g. A2LA, Perry Johnson, LAB, etc..) to perform onsite NELAP laboratory assessments while preserving the state's authority through their issuance of a laboratory license. Significant cost savings and conformity assessment program performance improvements are experienced by public agencies implementing TPA.