

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5733

As of January 21, 2022

Title: An act relating to civil asset forfeiture.

Brief Description: Concerning civil asset forfeiture.

Sponsors: Senators Padden and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/24/22.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires seizing agencies to keep detailed records about property seized and forfeited under state law and any agreement with any federal agency for each forfeiture.
- Requires the seizing agency to report detailed records of expenditures from the sum of the net proceeds of all forfeitures to the attorney general by March 1st of each year.
- Establishes requirements for agencies to submit quarterly and annual reports to the attorney general of the detailed records.
- Requires the attorney general to establish and maintain a searchable public website of the detailed records.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Tim Ford (786-7423)

Background: The Uniform Controlled Substances Act allows forfeiture of real and personal property used in drug-related offenses. When property is seized under the authority of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act, the seizing enforcement agency must

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serve notice of the seizure on the owner of the property and on any person having any known right or interest in the property. This notice must be served within 15 days of the seizure of the property.

A person asserting a claim of ownership or right to possession of the seized property must notify the seizing law enforcement agency of their claim within the time period prescribed by statute. If no person notifies the seizing law enforcement agency of the person's claim of ownership or right to possession within 45 days of the seizure of personal property, or 90 days of the seizure of real property, the property seized is deemed forfeited.

Once property is deemed forfeited, the enforcement agency may retain the property for official use, sell the property, dispose of the property, or forward it to the Drug Enforcement Administration. Ten percent of the net proceeds of any property forfeited during the preceding calendar year must be remitted to the state treasurer for deposit to the general fund.

Summary of Bill: Agencies who seize and forfeiture property in drug cases must keep records about the property seized and forfeited. The records must include:

- the name of the seizing agency;
- date of seizure;
- type of property seized;
- description of the property including the make, model, year, and serial number;
- the street address or description of the location where the seizure occurred;
- if the seizure was adopted by the federal government, part of a joint taskforce, or through other arrangements with the federal government;
- the crime the suspect was charged with;
- if the suspect was convicted of a crime;
- if the forfeiture was contested by a suspect, innocent owner claimant, joint-owner, or another property owner;
- disposition of the property through the forfeiture process, such as being returned to the suspect, a joint owner or third-party owner, sold, destroyed, or retained by law enforcement;
- date of disposition of the property;
- basis for disposition of property, such as suspect found not guilty, plea agreement, criminal forfeiture or civil forfeiture;
- value of the property forfeited; and
- the net proceeds retained by the law enforcement agency that seized the property.

Each calendar quarter when property is forfeited, the seizing agency must file a report, with all records, to the attorney general. The attorney general must establish and maintain a searchable public website that includes all of the records. The quarterly report does not need to include a record of forfeited property still being held for use as evidence during an investigation or prosecution of a case or during an appeal from a conviction. By March 1st each year, the seizing agency must file with the attorney general a report summarizing the

agency's expenditures from the sum of the net proceeds of all seized and forfeited property in each of the following categories:

- abuse, crime, and gang prevention programs;
- witness protection, informant fees, and controlled buys;
- salaries, overtime, and benefits;
- professional outside services including auditing, court reporting, expert witness, outside attorney fees, and membership fees paid to trade associations;
- travel, meals, entertainment, conferences, training and continuing education seminars;
- other operating expenses including office supplies, postage, and printing;
- capital expenditures including vehicles, firearms, equipment, computers, and furniture;
- other expenditures of forfeiture proceeds; and
- the total value of forfeited property held by the agency at the end of the reporting period.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2022.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.