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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO FORFEITURE.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that forfeiture is used  
2 to protect the public from harmful products and the property of  
3 criminal enterprise. As a result, criminals are deprived of  
4 their working capital and their profits. A secondary benefit of  
5 forfeiture laws is that forfeited property or the proceeds of  
6 its sale are turned over to law enforcement and used to fight  
7 crime.

8           In 2010, the Institute for Justice published a report  
9 titled, *Policing for Profit: The Abuse of Civil Asset*  
10 *Forfeiture*. This report examined the use and abuse of civil  
11 asset forfeiture and graded the civil forfeiture laws of all  
12 fifty states and the federal government. The report found that  
13 under most state and federal laws, law enforcement keeps some or  
14 all proceeds from civil forfeitures, which may encourage  
15 policing for profit when law enforcement agencies pursue  
16 forfeitures to boost their budgets at the expense of other law  
17 enforcement priorities. Furthermore, the report criticized the  
18 lower standard of proof the government is required to use in



1 civil forfeiture proceedings to establish that the forfeited  
2 property is connected to the alleged criminal activity and  
3 criticized the burden that is placed on the forfeited property  
4 owner to prove that the forfeited property was used illegally  
5 without the owner's knowledge or consent. Lastly, the report  
6 found that there was limited oversight and accountability of  
7 money raised and spent through civil forfeiture actions. Hawaii  
8 received a D grade.

9 Chapter 712A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, provides for  
10 forfeiture of property used or acquired in connection with the  
11 commission of certain criminal offenses and for the distribution  
12 of property, or its proceeds, to law enforcement agencies for  
13 law enforcement purposes. The department of the attorney  
14 general distributes administratively or judicially forfeited  
15 property, and the sale proceeds thereof, to law enforcement  
16 agencies. The department of the attorney general processes  
17 petitions for administrative forfeiture of personal property  
18 valued at less than \$100,000 or of any vehicle or conveyance  
19 regardless of value, but not real property. In a case initiated  
20 as an administrative forfeiture proceeding, a person may  
21 petition for remission or mitigation upon showing that the



1 person is the owner of the property, had no knowledge that the  
2 property was or would be involved in any violation of the law,  
3 had no knowledge of the particular violation that subjected the  
4 property to seizure and forfeiture, and had no knowledge that  
5 the user of the property had any record for the violation that  
6 subjected the property to seizure and forfeiture. A prosecuting  
7 attorney commences judicial forfeiture proceedings concerning  
8 real property or personal property valued in excess of \$100,000  
9 by filing a petition for forfeiture in the circuit court.

10 The purpose of this Act is to establish a working group to  
11 review and discuss Hawaii's forfeiture laws and make  
12 recommendations to improve these laws to ensure that forfeiture  
13 is used for its intended purposes rather than to create an  
14 incentive for law enforcement agencies to generate revenue  
15 through forfeiture.

16 SECTION 2. (a) The department of the attorney general  
17 shall establish a working group to review and discuss Hawaii's  
18 forfeiture laws and make recommendations to improve these laws.  
19 The working group shall include the following members:

20 (1) The attorney general or the attorney general's  
21 designee;



- 1 (2) The chief justice or the chief justice's designee;
- 2 (3) One representative of the prosecutors from each of the
- 3 four counties;
- 4 (4) One representative of the police chiefs from each of
- 5 the four counties;
- 6 (5) The chairperson of the Hawaii access to justice
- 7 commission or the chairperson's designee;
- 8 (6) The president of the Hawaii State Bar Association or
- 9 the president's designee;
- 10 (7) One representative of the American Civil Liberties
- 11 Union;
- 12 (8) One representative of the Drug Policy Forum of Hawaii;
- 13 and
- 14 (9) One representative of the office of the public
- 15 defender.
- 16 (b) The working group shall examine and evaluate Hawaii's
- 17 forfeiture laws by:
  - 18 (1) Determining the effectiveness and efficiency of such
  - 19 laws by examining:
    - 20 (A) The total amount and type of property seized by
    - 21 law enforcement agencies;



- 1 (B) The total number of administrative and judicial
- 2 actions filed by prosecuting attorneys and the
- 3 disposition of such actions;
- 4 (C) The total number of claims or petitions for
- 5 remission or mitigation filed in administrative
- 6 actions and the disposition of such actions;
- 7 (D) The total amount and type of property forfeited
- 8 and the sale proceeds thereof; and
- 9 (E) The total amount and type of property distributed
- 10 to units of state and local government;
- 11 (2) Examining the different forfeiture laws of other
- 12 jurisdictions to determine whether these statutory
- 13 schemes may serve as a model for Hawaii's forfeiture
- 14 laws;
- 15 (3) Identifying any possible areas for abuse or concerns
- 16 regarding Hawaii's forfeiture laws, including any
- 17 impediments that innocent owners of forfeited property
- 18 face when petitioning for remission or mitigation; and
- 19 (4) Developing solutions to address problem areas or
- 20 impediments and streamline the forfeiture process.



1 (c) The working group shall submit a written report of its  
2 findings and recommendations, including any proposed  
3 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior  
4 to the convening of the regular session of 2017.

5 (d) The working group shall cease to exist on June 30,  
6 2017.

7 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

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**Report Title:**

Forfeiture; Working Group; Department of the Attorney General

**Description:**

Requires the department of the attorney general to establish a working group to review and discuss Hawaii's asset forfeiture laws and make recommendations to improve these laws. (SD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

