



**Testimony Before the Special Committee on Civil Asset Forfeiture, Kansas Legislature**

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My name is Greg Glod, and I am the Senior Fellow for Public Safety and Criminal Justice at Americans for Prosperity (AFP). I want to thank Chair Stephen Owens and the rest of the Special Committee on Civil Asset Forfeiture for allowing me to speak on an issue that has a profound impact on all Kansans. As one of the largest grassroots organizations in the country, AFP is driving long-term solutions to some of the country's biggest problems.

Our organization, and its thousands of activists across Kansas, are dedicated to breaking barriers that stand in the way of people realizing their full potential. We believe that to achieve these goals, our criminal justice system must prioritize its resources to maximize public safety, while ensuring citizen's Constitutional rights are respected. It is for these reasons that we support reforms to current civil asset forfeiture laws that will still allow law enforcement to ensure criminals are not able to utilize or profit from their ill-gotten gains, while protecting the property rights of all Kansans.

***Current Issues with Kansas Civil Forfeiture Law***

The philosophy behind forfeiture is one that AFP emphatically supports: ensuring those who break the law are separated from the property used and/or gained to commit that crime. However, the current law in Kansas does not afford necessary due process protections for innocent property owners to effectively defend themselves.

It's important to remember that the process is civil, meaning protections afforded citizens in a criminal proceeding are not provided in civil forfeitures. This includes a low burden of proof (preponderance of the evidence, which is essentially "more likely than not" rather than beyond a reasonable doubt), and innocent property owners must prove their property's innocence, rather than the government. This creates an unduly burdensome and expensive process for innocent owners to get their property back from the government. Most forfeitures end in a default, meaning the individual doesn't even contest the forfeiture.

Additionally, Kansas law enforcement is allowed to keep 100% of the proceeds of a forfeiture. When law enforcement agencies significantly [rely on these types of funding sources](#),<sup>1</sup> it leaves less time for more important functions such as preventing and solving violent crimes.

***Criminal Forfeiture Will Still Maintain Public Safety***

Since 2014, 36 states have reformed their forfeiture laws and have shown that these changes to civil forfeiture will not impact public safety. In 2015, New Mexico passed a law that eliminated civil

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<sup>1</sup> Myers, Currie. The Right and Wrong Way to Fund Police. Governing. July 23, 2021.

forfeiture, replaced it with civil forfeiture, and removed financial incentives for law enforcement agencies. [An analysis](#)<sup>2</sup> of this bill shows no negative impact on crime in the state.

Additionally, a [2021 study](#) from the Institute of Justice looked at five states (Arizona, Hawaii, Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota) that often utilize civil forfeiture.<sup>3</sup> The report found that 1) increases in forfeiture revenue do not help police solve more crimes; 2) forfeiture proceeds do not decrease illegal drug use; and 3) forfeiture activity increases as unemployment increases.

### ***Current State of Play in Kansas***

In 2018, the Kansas legislature passed [K.S.A. 60-4127](#), requiring the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (KBI) to establish a platform for every local law enforcement agency in Kansas to report comprehensive information on every seizure and forfeiture in the state. Americans for Prosperity Foundation (AFPF) examined the data,<sup>4</sup> which includes incident reports on all “completed” forfeiture actions from July 1, 2019, to December 31, 2021. In May 2022, AFPF released a report based on this data and in August 2023, [updated the report](#) to include 2022 numbers.<sup>5</sup> The report found the following:

- Kansas law enforcement reported seizing \$25.3 million from people in the state.
- On average, law enforcement reports taking over \$17,000 per day in money and property from people in Kansas.
- KBI annual reports omit up to one-third of the total value of assets forfeited. This is because the report does not include the amount of property and cash gained from forfeiture proceedings where Kansas law enforcement hands over the property to federal authorities (known as “equitable sharing”) to initiate forfeiture proceedings. Under equitable sharing, local and state law enforcement can still keep up to 80% of the proceeds, even though federal authorities utilize their process, rather than the states. KBI data shows that the state forfeited \$12.7 million but does not include an additional \$5.4 million in seized assets sent to the federal government.
- Most seizures do not involve amounts that would disrupt organized crime operations. 62% of seizures have a total value of \$5,000 or less.
- While 79% of owners in the Kansas Asset Seizure and Forfeiture Repository (KASFR) are still legally innocent, 90% of all seized property has been forfeited.
- For those few fortunate people who were able to recover their seized property, it took them an average of 413 days to do so.
- For most people whose property has been seized by Kansas law enforcement, the cost of recovering their property is greater than the value of the property seized. The Institute for Justice estimates that it costs roughly \$3,000 to hire an attorney to challenge a simple state forfeiture case. Half of all seizures in the KASFR are for \$3,000 or less.

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<sup>2</sup> Institute for Justice. Policing for Profit: Third Edition. December 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Kelly, Brian. Does Forfeiture Work? Institute for Justice. February 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Kimbrell, Thomas. Asset Seizures in the Sunflower State: How Civil Asset Forfeiture Imperils People’s Rights in Kansas. Americans for Prosperity Foundation. May 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Kimbrell, Thomas. Asset Seizures in the Sunflower State: How Civil Asset Forfeiture Imperils People’s Rights in Kansas: 2022 Numbers Update. Americans for Prosperity Foundation. August 2023.

### ***Recommendations***

AFP recommends that the Kansas legislature pass policies that were included in 2023's HB 2380. This legislation will not take away law enforcement's ability to seize property connected with or involved in crime and will only require them to wait until after a criminal conviction has been secured to forfeit any property they have seized. It will also take steps to conform Kansas law with the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Timbs v. Indiana* where the Court unanimously ruled that the 8th Amendment's excessive fines clause applied to a state's use of fines and forfeitures. We believe these reforms are vital to protect innocent property owners and ensure law enforcement can focus on their core mission of preventing and solving violent crime. The legislature and local governments should fully fund our law enforcement agencies so that they do not feel compelled to act as tax collectors to keep our communities safe.

I thank you again for the opportunity to discuss civil forfeiture with this esteemed body and would be happy to answer any questions today or in the future.

Sincerely,

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