

RCW 9A.88.150 Seizure and forfeiture. (1) The following are subject to seizure and forfeiture and no property right exists in them:

(a) Any property or other interest acquired or maintained in violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070 to the extent of the investment of funds, and any appreciation or income attributable to the investment, from a violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070;

(b) All conveyances, including aircraft, vehicles, or vessels, which are used, or intended for use, in any manner to facilitate a violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070, except that:

(i) No conveyance used by any person as a common carrier in the transaction of business as a common carrier is subject to forfeiture under this section unless it appears that the owner or other person in charge of the conveyance is a consenting party or privy to a violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070;

(ii) No conveyance is subject to forfeiture under this section by reason of any act or omission established by the owner thereof to have been committed or omitted without the owner's knowledge or consent;

(iii) A forfeiture of a conveyance encumbered by a bona fide security interest is subject to the interest of the secured party if the secured party neither had knowledge of nor consented to the act or omission; and

(iv) When the owner of a conveyance has been arrested for a violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070, the conveyance in which the person is arrested may not be subject to forfeiture unless it is seized or process is issued for its seizure within ten days of the owner's arrest;

(c) Any property, contractual right, or claim against property used to influence any enterprise that a person has established, operated, controlled, conducted, or participated in the conduct of, in violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070;

(d) All proceeds traceable to or derived from an offense defined in RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070 and all moneys, negotiable instruments, securities, and other things of value significantly used or intended to be used significantly to facilitate commission of the offense;

(e) All books, records, and research products and materials, including formulas, microfilm, tapes, and data which are used, or intended for use, in violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070;

(f) All moneys, negotiable instruments, securities, or other tangible or intangible property of value furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for a violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070, all tangible or intangible personal property, proceeds, or assets acquired in whole or in part with proceeds traceable to an exchange or series of exchanges in violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070, and all moneys, negotiable instruments, and securities used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070. A forfeiture of money, negotiable instruments, securities, or other tangible or intangible property encumbered by a bona fide security interest is subject to the interest of the secured party if, at the time the security interest was created, the secured party neither had knowledge of nor consented to the act or omission. No personal property may be forfeited under this subsection (1)(f), to the extent of the interest of an owner, by reason of any act or omission, which that owner

establishes was committed or omitted without the owner's knowledge or consent; and

(g) All real property, including any right, title, and interest in the whole of any lot or tract of land, and any appurtenances or improvements which are being used with the knowledge of the owner for a violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070, or which have been acquired in whole or in part with proceeds traceable to an exchange or series of exchanges in violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070, if a substantial nexus exists between the violation and the real property. However:

(i) No property may be forfeited pursuant to this subsection (1)(g), to the extent of the interest of an owner, by reason of any act or omission committed or omitted without the owner's knowledge or consent;

(ii) A forfeiture of real property encumbered by a bona fide security interest is subject to the interest of the secured party if the secured party, at the time the security interest was created, neither had knowledge of nor consented to the act or omission.

(2) Real or personal property subject to forfeiture under this section may be seized by any law enforcement officer of this state upon process issued by any superior court having jurisdiction over the property. Seizure of real property shall include the filing of a lis pendens by the seizing agency. Real property seized under this section shall not be transferred or otherwise conveyed until ninety days after seizure or until a judgment of forfeiture is entered, whichever is later: PROVIDED, That real property seized under this section may be transferred or conveyed to any person or entity who acquires title by foreclosure or deed in lieu of foreclosure of a security interest. Seizure of personal property without process may be made if:

(a) The seizure is incident to an arrest or a search under a search warrant;

(b) The property subject to seizure has been the subject of a prior judgment in favor of the state in a criminal injunction or forfeiture proceeding; or

(c) The law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe that the property was used or is intended to be used in violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070.

(3) In the event of seizure pursuant to subsection (2) of this section, proceedings for forfeiture shall be deemed commenced by the seizure. The law enforcement agency under whose authority the seizure was made shall cause notice to be served within fifteen days following the seizure on the owner of the property seized and the person in charge thereof and any person having any known right or interest therein, including any community property interest, of the seizure and intended forfeiture of the seized property. Service of notice of seizure of real property shall be made according to the rules of civil procedure. However, the state may not obtain a default judgment with respect to real property against a party who is served by substituted service absent an affidavit stating that a good faith effort has been made to ascertain if the defaulted party is incarcerated within the state, and that there is no present basis to believe that the party is incarcerated within the state. Notice of seizure in the case of property subject to a security interest that has been perfected by filing a financing statement, or a certificate of title, shall be made by service upon the secured party or the secured party's assignee at the address shown on the financing statement or the certificate of title. The notice of seizure in other cases may be served by any

method authorized by law or court rule including, but not limited to, service by certified mail with return receipt requested. Service by mail shall be deemed complete upon mailing within the fifteen day period following the seizure.

(4) If no person notifies the seizing law enforcement agency in writing of the person's claim of ownership or right to possession of items specified in subsection (1) of this section within forty-five days of the service of notice from the seizing agency in the case of personal property and ninety days in the case of real property, the item seized shall be deemed forfeited. The community property interest in real property of a person whose spouse or domestic partner committed a violation giving rise to seizure of the real property may not be forfeited if the person did not participate in the violation.

(5) If any person notifies the seizing law enforcement agency in writing of the person's claim of ownership or right to possession of items specified in subsection (1) of this section within forty-five days of the service of notice from the seizing agency in the case of personal property and ninety days in the case of real property, the person or persons shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard as to the claim or right. The notice of claim may be served by any method authorized by law or court rule including, but not limited to, service by first-class mail. Service by mail shall be deemed complete upon mailing within the forty-five day period following service of the notice of seizure in the case of personal property and within the ninety day period following service of the notice of seizure in the case of real property. The hearing shall be before the chief law enforcement officer of the seizing agency or the chief law enforcement officer's designee, except where the seizing agency is a state agency as defined in RCW 34.12.020(4), the hearing shall be before the chief law enforcement officer of the seizing agency or an administrative law judge appointed under chapter 34.12 RCW, except that any person asserting a claim or right may remove the matter to a court of competent jurisdiction. Removal of any matter involving personal property may only be accomplished according to the rules of civil procedure. The person seeking removal of the matter must serve process against the state, county, political subdivision, or municipality that operates the seizing agency, and any other party of interest, in accordance with RCW 4.28.080 or 4.92.020, within forty-five days after the person seeking removal has notified the seizing law enforcement agency of the person's claim of ownership or right to possession. The court to which the matter is to be removed shall be the district court when the aggregate value of personal property is within the jurisdictional limit set forth in RCW 3.66.020. A hearing before the seizing agency and any appeal therefrom shall be under Title 34 RCW. In all cases, the burden of proof is upon the law enforcement agency to establish, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the property is subject to forfeiture.

The seizing law enforcement agency shall promptly return the article or articles to the claimant upon a determination by the administrative law judge or court that the claimant is the present lawful owner or is lawfully entitled to possession thereof of items specified in subsection (1) of this section.

(6) In any proceeding to forfeit property under this title, where the claimant substantially prevails, the claimant is entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees reasonably incurred by the claimant. In addition, in a court hearing between two or more claimants to the

article or articles involved, the prevailing party is entitled to a judgment for costs and reasonable attorneys' fees.

(7) When property is forfeited under this chapter, the seizing law enforcement agency may:

(a) Retain it for official use or upon application by any law enforcement agency of this state release the property to that agency for the exclusive use of enforcing this chapter or chapter 9.68A RCW;

(b) Sell that which is not required to be destroyed by law and which is not harmful to the public; or

(c) Request the appropriate sheriff or director of public safety to take custody of the property and remove it for disposition in accordance with law.

(8) (a) When property is forfeited, the seizing agency shall keep a record indicating the identity of the prior owner, if known, a description of the property, the disposition of the property, the value of the property at the time of seizure, and the amount of proceeds realized from disposition of the property.

(b) Each seizing agency shall retain records of forfeited property for at least seven years.

(c) Each seizing agency shall file a report including a copy of the records of forfeited property with the state treasurer each calendar quarter.

(d) The quarterly report need not include a record of forfeited property that is still being held for use as evidence during the investigation or prosecution of a case or during the appeal from a conviction.

(9) (a) By January 31st of each year, each seizing agency shall remit to the state an amount equal to ten percent of the net proceeds of any property forfeited during the preceding calendar year. Money remitted shall be deposited in the prostitution prevention and intervention account under RCW 43.63A.740.

(b) The net proceeds of forfeited property is the value of the forfeitable interest in the property after deducting the cost of satisfying any bona fide security interest to which the property is subject at the time of seizure; and in the case of sold property, after deducting the cost of sale, including reasonable fees or commissions paid to independent selling agents, and the cost of any valid landlord's claim for damages under subsection (12) of this section.

(c) The value of sold forfeited property is the sale price. The value of destroyed property and retained firearms or illegal property is zero.

(10) Net proceeds not required to be remitted to the state shall be used for payment of all proper expenses of the investigation leading to the seizure, including any money delivered to the subject of the investigation by the law enforcement agency, and of the proceedings for forfeiture and sale, including expenses of seizure, maintenance of custody, advertising, actual costs of the prosecuting or city attorney, and court costs. Money remaining after payment of these expenses shall be retained by the seizing law enforcement agency for the exclusive use of enforcing the provisions of this chapter or chapter 9.68A RCW.

(11) Upon the entry of an order of forfeiture of real property, the court shall forward a copy of the order to the assessor of the county in which the property is located. Orders for the forfeiture of real property shall be entered by the superior court, subject to court rules. Such an order shall be filed by the seizing agency in the

county auditor's records in the county in which the real property is located.

(12) A landlord may assert a claim against proceeds from the sale of assets seized and forfeited under subsection (9) of this section, only if:

(a) A law enforcement officer, while acting in his or her official capacity, directly caused damage to the complaining landlord's property while executing a search of a tenant's residence;

(b) The landlord has applied any funds remaining in the tenant's deposit, to which the landlord has a right under chapter 59.18 RCW, to cover the damage directly caused by a law enforcement officer prior to asserting a claim under the provisions of this section:

(i) Only if the funds applied under (b) of this subsection are insufficient to satisfy the damage directly caused by a law enforcement officer, may the landlord seek compensation for the damage by filing a claim against the governmental entity under whose authority the law enforcement agency operates within thirty days after the search;

(ii) Only if the governmental entity denies or fails to respond to the landlord's claim within sixty days of the date of filing, may the landlord collect damages under this subsection by filing within thirty days of denial or the expiration of the sixty day period, whichever occurs first, a claim with the seizing law enforcement agency. The seizing law enforcement agency must notify the landlord of the status of the claim by the end of the thirty day period. Nothing in this section requires the claim to be paid by the end of the sixty day or thirty day period; and

(c) For any claim filed under (b) of this subsection, the law enforcement agency shall pay the claim unless the agency provides substantial proof that the landlord either:

(i) Knew or consented to actions of the tenant in violation of RCW 9.68A.100, 9.68A.101, or 9A.88.070; or

(ii) Failed to respond to a notification of the illegal activity, provided by a law enforcement agency under RCW 59.18.075, within seven days of receipt of notification of the illegal activity.

(13) The landlord's claim for damages under subsection (12) of this section may not include a claim for loss of business and is limited to:

(a) Damage to tangible property and clean-up costs;

(b) The lesser of the cost of repair or fair market value of the damage directly caused by a law enforcement officer;

(c) The proceeds from the sale of the specific tenant's property seized and forfeited under subsection (9) of this section; and

(d) The proceeds available after the seizing law enforcement agency satisfies any bona fide security interest in the tenant's property and costs related to sale of the tenant's property as provided by subsection (12) of this section.

(14) Subsections (12) and (13) of this section do not limit any other rights a landlord may have against a tenant to collect for damages. However, if a law enforcement agency satisfies a landlord's claim under subsection (12) of this section, the rights the landlord has against the tenant for damages directly caused by a law enforcement officer under the terms of the landlord and tenant's contract are subrogated to the law enforcement agency. [2022 c 162 s 5; 2014 c 188 s 4; 2012 c 140 s 1.]

Effective date—2022 c 162: See note following RCW 69.50.505.