
HOUSE BILL 1731

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representative Waters

Read first time 01/30/25. Referred to Committee on Civil Rights & Judiciary.

1 AN ACT Relating to unclaimed property held by a museum or
2 historical society; and amending RCW 63.26.040.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 63.26.040 and 1988 c 226 s 6 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 (1) When a museum or historical society is required to give
7 notice of abandonment of property or of termination of a loan, the
8 museum or historical society shall ~~((mail—such))~~ send an initial
9 notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the last known
10 owner at the most recent address of such owner as shown on the
11 museum's or society's records. If the museum or society has no
12 address on record, or the museum or society does not receive written
13 proof of receipt of the mailed notice within ~~((thirty))~~ 30 days of
14 the date the notice was mailed, the museum or society shall
15 ~~((publish))~~ provide notice, at least once each week for ~~((two))~~ three
16 consecutive weeks, ~~((in a newspaper of general circulation in both~~
17 ~~the county in which the museum is located and the county in which the~~
18 ~~last known address, if available, of the owner is located))~~ using one
19 or more of the following methods:

20 (a) Posting on a publicly accessible page on its official
21 website;

1 (b) Sending an email from an organizational email address to any
2 known email addresses of the owner or any publicized email lists;

3 (c) Posting on the official social media accounts of the museum
4 or society;

5 (d) Physically posting a notice in a public space at the museum's
6 or society's primary location, such as a lobby or other area
7 accessible to visitors;

8 (e) Documenting a phone call attempt to any known phone numbers
9 of the owner; or

10 (f) Any other electronic communication methods reasonably
11 expected to reach the owner or interested parties.

12 (2) The (~~published~~) notice, whether digital or printed, shall
13 contain the following:

14 (a) A description of the unclaimed property;

15 (b) The name and last known address of the owner;

16 (c) A request that all persons who may have any knowledge of the
17 whereabouts of the owner provide written notice to the museum or
18 society; and

19 (d) A statement that if written assertion of title is not
20 presented by the owner to the museum or society within ninety days
21 from the date of the second (~~published~~) notice, the property shall
22 be deemed abandoned or donated and shall become the property of the
23 museum or society.

24 (3) For purposes of this chapter, if the loan of property was
25 made to a branch of a museum or society, the museum or society is
26 deemed to be located in the county in which the branch is located.
27 Otherwise the museum or society is located in the county in which it
28 has its principal place of business.

29 (4)(a) When property is found in the collection of a museum or
30 historical society without donor documentation or when property is
31 abandoned at a museum or historical society without the donor's
32 identity being provided, the museum or historical society shall
33 follow a process to establish ownership of the property. The process
34 must include an unknown donor notification, where notice is given to
35 the public through at least one of the following methods:

36 (i) Posting on a publicly accessible page on the museum's or
37 society's official website; or

38 (ii) Physically posting a notice in a public space at the
39 museum's or society's primary location, such as a lobby or other area
40 accessible to visitors.

1 (b) The unknown donor notification shall contain the following:
2 (i) A general description of the property;
3 (ii) A statement requesting that any person claiming ownership or
4 having information about the possible donor contact the museum or
5 society in writing;
6 (iii) Contact information for the museum or society, including an
7 address and email address where claims or inquiries may be sent; and
8 (iv) A statement that if no claim or information establishing
9 ownership is received by the museum or society within 90 days from
10 the date of the notice, the property shall be deemed donated and
11 shall become the property of the museum or society.
12 (c) Any person claiming ownership of the property must provide
13 proof of ownership in writing to the museum or historical society.

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