

RCW 9.46.231 Gambling devices, real and personal property—

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

(a) All gambling devices as defined in this chapter;

(b) All furnishings, fixtures, equipment, and stock, including without limitation furnishings and fixtures adaptable to nongambling uses and equipment and stock for printing, recording, computing, transporting, or safekeeping, used in connection with professional gambling or maintaining a gambling premises;

(c) All conveyances, including aircraft, vehicles, or vessels, that are used, or intended for use, in any manner to facilitate the sale, delivery, receipt, or operation of any gambling device, or the promotion or operation of a professional gambling activity, except that:

(i) A conveyance used by any person as a common carrier in the transaction of business as a common carrier is not 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 this chapter;

(ii) A conveyance is not 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) If the owner of a conveyance has been arrested under this chapter 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;

(d) All books, records, and research products and materials, including formulas, microfilm, tapes, and electronic data that are used, or intended for use, in violation of this chapter;

(e) All moneys, negotiable instruments, securities, or other tangible or intangible property of value at stake or displayed in or in connection with professional gambling activity or furnished or intended to be furnished by any person to facilitate the promotion or operation of a professional gambling activity;

(f) All tangible or intangible personal property, proceeds, or assets acquired in whole or in part with proceeds traceable to professional gambling activity and all moneys, negotiable instruments, and securities used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of this chapter. 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. Personal property may not be forfeited under this subsection (1)(f), to the extent of the interest of an owner, by reason of any act or omission that 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 that:

- (i) Have been used with the knowledge of the owner for the manufacturing, processing, delivery, importing, or exporting of any illegal gambling equipment, or operation of a professional gambling activity that would constitute a felony violation of this chapter; or
- (ii) Have been acquired in whole or in part with proceeds traceable to a professional gambling activity, if the activity is not less than a class C felony.

Real property forfeited under this chapter that is encumbered by a bona fide security interest remains 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. Property may not be forfeited under this subsection, 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.

(2) (a) A law enforcement officer of this state may seize real or personal property subject to forfeiture under this chapter upon process issued by any superior court having jurisdiction over the property. Seizure of real property includes the filing of a lis pendens by the seizing agency. Real property seized under this section may not be transferred or otherwise conveyed until ninety days after seizure or until a judgment of forfeiture is entered, whichever is later, but 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 bona fide security interest.

(b) Seizure of personal property without process may be made if:

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

(ii) 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 based upon this chapter;

(iii) A law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe that the property is directly or indirectly dangerous to health or safety; or

(iv) The law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe that the property was used or is intended to be used in violation of this chapter.

(3) In the event of seizure under subsection (2) of this section, proceedings for forfeiture are 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 must 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 in accordance with chapter 62A.9A RCW, or a certificate of title, must 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 is 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 seizure in the case of personal property and ninety days in the case of real property, the item seized is 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 seizure in the case of personal property and ninety days in the case of real property, the person or persons must be afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard as to the claim or right. The hearing must be before the chief law enforcement officer of the seizing agency or the chief law enforcement officer's designee, except if the seizing agency is a state agency as defined in RCW 34.12.020(4), the hearing must 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 must be the district court if 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 must be under Title 34 RCW. 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. In cases involving personal property, the burden of producing evidence is upon the person claiming to be the lawful owner or the person claiming to have the lawful right to possession of the property. In cases involving property seized under subsection (1)(a) of this section, the only issues to be determined by the tribunal are whether the item seized is a gambling device, and whether the device is an antique device as defined by RCW 9.46.235. In cases involving real property, the burden of producing evidence is upon the law enforcement agency. The burden of proof that the seized real property is subject to forfeiture is upon the law enforcement agency. The seizing law enforcement agency shall promptly return the article or articles to the claimant upon a final 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) If 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 the agency for training or use in enforcing this chapter;

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

(c) Destroy any articles that may not be lawfully possessed within the state of Washington, or that have a fair market value of less than one hundred dollars.

(7)(a) If 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. 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.

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

(8) The seizing law enforcement agency shall retain forfeited property and net proceeds exclusively for the expansion and improvement of gambling-related law enforcement activity. Money retained under this section may not be used to supplant preexisting funding sources.

(9) Gambling devices that are possessed, transferred, sold, or offered for sale in violation of this chapter are contraband and must be seized and summarily forfeited to the state. Gambling equipment that is seized or comes into the possession of a law enforcement agency, the owners of which are unknown, are contraband and must be summarily forfeited to the state.

(10) 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. The superior court shall enter orders for the forfeiture of real property, subject to court rules. The seizing agency shall file such an order in the county auditor's records in the county in which the real property is located.

(11)(a) A landlord may assert a claim against proceeds from the sale of assets seized and forfeited under subsection (6)(b) of this section, only if:

(i) 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; and

(ii) 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 before asserting a claim under this section.

(A) Only if the funds applied under (a)(ii) 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; and

(B) 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 shall notify the landlord of the status of the claim by the end of the thirty-day period. This section does not require the claim to be paid by the end of the sixty-day or thirty-day period.

(b) For any claim filed under (a)(ii) 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 this chapter; or

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

(12) The landlord's claim for damages under subsection (11) 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 (6)(b) 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 (7)(a) of this section.

(13) Subsections (11) and (12) 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 (11) 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.

(14) Liability is not imposed by this section upon any authorized state, county, or municipal officer, including a commission special agent, in the lawful performance of his or her duties. [2008 c 6 s 629; 1997 c 128 s 1; 1994 c 218 s 7.]

Part headings not law—Severability—2008 c 6: See RCW 26.60.900 and 26.60.901.

Effective date—1994 c 218: See note following RCW 9.46.010.