

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Appropriations

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BILL: CS/SB 1534

INTRODUCER: Appropriations Committee (Recommended by the Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice); and Senator Brandes

SUBJECT: Disposition of Liens and Forfeited Property

DATE: April 20, 2015

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Dugger</u>	<u>Cannon</u>	<u>CJ</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	<u>Clodfelter</u>	<u>Sadberry</u>	<u>ACJ</u>	<u>Recommend: Fav/CS</u>
3.	<u>Clodfelter</u>	<u>Kynoch</u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>

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**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

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**I. Summary:**

CS/SB 1534 amends the Florida Contraband Forfeiture Act (sections 932.701 through 932.706, Florida Statutes) (act) by adding a number of new requirements for law enforcement agencies that seize property, including:

- Annual or more frequent review of the agency's seizures, settlements, and forfeitures and prompt correction of any deficiencies;
- Use of written policies, procedures, and training to ensure compliance with applicable legal requirements regarding seizing, maintaining, and forfeiting property;
- A prohibition against making employment, salary, or other compensation of a law enforcement officer dependent upon seizure quotas.
- Prompt review of the probable cause for all seizures by supervisory personnel and prompt notification to the agency's legal counsel for determination of legal sufficiency to proceed with a forfeiture action;
- Use of written policies and procedures to promote the prompt release of seized property when there is no legitimate basis for holding it, and for prompt review of the validity of all asserted claims of interest to the seized property;
- Maintenance of training records to show that every law enforcement officer has completed basic and continuing education forfeiture training required by the act; and
- Completion of a detailed annual report indicating whether the agency has received or forfeited property, to be kept on file and accessible to the public.

- Prohibiting the seizing agency from retaining forfeited property for the agency's use.
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- Requiring the seizing agency to submit a detailed quarterly report of its seizure and forfeiture activities to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.
- Deleting a provision relating to repayment of funds that were advanced from a municipality's general fund prior to October 1, 2001.

The bill will have an insignificant fiscal impact on seizing agencies related to filing of reports and revision of policies.

This bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2015.

## II. Present Situation:

The Contraband Forfeiture Act, ss. 932.701 through 932.706, F.S., prescribes procedures for law enforcement agencies to follow when seizing, forfeiting, and disposing of property under the act. Currently, under s. 932.703, F.S., any contraband article, vessel, motor vehicle, aircraft, other personal property, or real property used in violation of the act, or in, upon, or by means of which any violation of the act has taken or is taking place, may be seized and shall be forfeited subject to the provisions of the act.<sup>1</sup>

Section 932.704, F.S., requires the Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), in consultation with the Florida Sheriffs Association and the Florida Police Chiefs Association, to develop guidelines and training procedures to be used by state and local law enforcement agencies and state attorneys in implementing the act. Each agency that seizes property shall periodically review its seizures, settlements, and forfeiture proceedings to determine whether they comply with the act and the adopted guidelines. The determination of whether an agency will file a forfeiture action must be the sole responsibility of the head of the agency or his or her designee. The determination of whether to seize currency must be made by supervisory personnel. The agency's legal counsel must be notified as soon as possible.<sup>2</sup>

Section 932.7055, F.S., provides for the disposition of liens and forfeited property under the act. The seizing agency may do any of the following when a final judgment of forfeiture is granted:

- Retain the property for the agency's use;
- Sell the property at a public auction or by sealed bid to the highest bidder; or
- Salvage, trade, or transfer the property to any public or nonprofit organization.<sup>3</sup>

If the property has a lien attached and the agency sells the property, the proceeds of the sale are to be distributed in this order:

- Payment of the balance due on any lien preserved by the court in the forfeiture proceedings.
- Payment of the cost incurred by the seizing agency in connection with the storage, maintenance, security, and forfeiture of such property.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 932.703(1), F.S. The constitutionality of the act was upheld by the Florida Supreme Court in *Department of Law Enforcement v. Real Property*, 588 So.2d 957 (Fla. 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Section 932.704(11), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Section 932.7055(1), F.S.

- Payment of court costs incurred in the forfeiture proceeding.<sup>4</sup>

The proceeds which remain after all liens and debts against the forfeited property are paid are then deposited into a special law enforcement trust fund and may be used to fund school resource officers, crime prevention, safe neighborhood, drug abuse education and prevention programs, or other law enforcement purposes, including defraying the cost of protracted or complex investigations, providing additional equipment or expertise, purchasing automated external defibrillators for law enforcement vehicles, and providing matching funds to obtain federal grants. These proceeds and interest may not be used to meet normal operation expenses.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, any local law enforcement agency that acquires at least \$15,000 under the act within a fiscal year must expend or donate no less than 15 percent of these proceeds for the support or operation of any drug treatment, drug abuse education, drug prevention, crime prevention, safe neighborhood, or school resource officer program. The agency has discretion to determine which program receives the funds.<sup>6</sup>

An agency or organization, other than the seizing agency, that wishes to receive such funds must apply to the sheriff or chief of police for an appropriation. If the agency or organization receives funding under the act, it must provide an accounting, indicating that the funds were only used for the above stated purposes.<sup>7</sup>

If the seizing agency is a local law enforcement agency, the proceeds are deposited into a special law enforcement trust fund established by the governing body of a county or municipality. The funds may be appropriated only to the sheriff's office by the board of county commissioners or to the police department by the governing body of the municipality when the sheriff or police chief has certified that the request for funds will be used in compliance with the act.<sup>8</sup>

If the seizing agency is a state agency, the remaining proceeds are deposited into the General Revenue Fund, except that some agencies have their own forfeiture trust fund, including:

- FDLE;
- Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation;
- Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles;
- Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission;
- State Attorney Offices;
- School Board Security Agencies;
- State University System Police Departments;
- Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services;
- Department of Military Affairs;
- Medicaid Fraud Control Unit of the Department of Legal Affairs;
- Division of State Fire Marshal of the Department of Financial Services; and

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<sup>4</sup> Sections 932.7055(3) and (4), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Section 932.7055(5), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 932.7055(5)(c)3., F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Section 932.7055(5)(c), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 932.7055(5), F.S.

- Division of Insurance Fraud of the Department of Financial Services.<sup>9</sup>

Section 932.706, F.S., requires the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission to develop a standardized course of training which is designed to develop proficiency in the seizure and forfeiture of property under the act. The curriculum must include racial and ethnic sensitivity, search and seizure case law, the use of drug-courier profiles, and the use of an order to stop based on a pretext.

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends the Florida Contraband Forfeiture Act (ss. 932.701 through 932.706, F.S.). Section 932.704, F.S., is amended to add the following requirements for law enforcement agencies that seize and forfeit contraband property:

- Annual or more frequent review of the agency's seizures, settlements, and forfeitures and prompt correction of any deficiencies;
- Use of written policies, procedures, and training to ensure compliance with applicable legal requirements regarding seizing, maintaining, and forfeiting property;
- A prohibition against making employment, salary, or other compensation of a law enforcement officer dependent upon seizure quotas.
- Prompt review of the probable cause for all seizures by supervisory personnel and prompt notification to the agency's legal counsel for determination of legal sufficiency to proceed with a forfeiture action;
- Use of written policies and procedures to promote the prompt release of seized property when there is no legitimate basis for holding it, and for prompt review of the validity of all asserted claims of interest to the seized property; and
- Maintenance of training records to show that every law enforcement officer has completed basic and continuing education forfeiture training required by the act.

Section 932.7055, F.S., is amended to:

- Prohibit the seizing agency from retaining forfeited property for the agency's use.
- Require the seizing agency to submit a detailed quarterly report of its seizure and forfeiture activities to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.
- Delete s. 932.7055(4)(d), F.S., which permits funds in a municipality's special law enforcement trust fund to be expended to reimburse the municipality's general fund for moneys advanced from the general fund to the special law enforcement trust fund before October 1, 2001. The paragraph is applicable only for Fiscal Year 2014-2015 and expires July 1, 2015. It was originally enacted as part of the implementing bill for the 2002-2003 General Appropriations Act and was applicable to Fiscal Year 2002-2003, but has been updated in the General Appropriations Act implementing bill each year since that time.

The bill also makes conforming changes and reenacts statutes to incorporate changes made by the bill.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2015.

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<sup>9</sup> Section 932.7055(6), F.S.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

## A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

## B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

## C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

## A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

## B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

## C. Government Sector Impact:

CS/SB 1534 will have an insignificant fiscal impact on seizing agencies related to filing of reports and revision of policies.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 932.701, 932.704, and 932.7055.

This bill creates section 932.7061 of the Florida Statutes.

This bill reenacts the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 27.3451, 381.0081, 874.08, 895.09, and 932.703.

This bill makes conforming amendments to cross references in the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 322.34, 323.001, 328.07, and 817.625.

**IX. Additional Information:**

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS by Appropriations on April 16, 2015:**

The committee substitute:

- Incorporates the contents of CS/SB 440 (2015), which adds a number of new requirements to the Florida Contraband Forfeiture Act (the act) relating to the seizure and forfeiture process, training of officers, reporting, and documentation. These changes are detailed in the description of amendments to s. 932.704, F.S., in the “Effects of Proposed Changes” section of this analysis.
- Requires a seizing agency to submit a detailed quarterly report of its seizure and forfeiture activities to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.