

## End Unfair Property Seizure by Police

Under "civil asset forfeiture" laws in Washington state, police are authorized to seize any valuable property they determine to be associated with certain drug-related crimes, even before the person being charged goes to court. If found innocent, the owner must navigate a complex process to have their valuable belongings returned.

Each year, police departments in Washington state keep millions of dollars in revenue from seized property, creating a profit incentive for police officers. **Between 2001 and 2019, \$145 million of assets were taken from Washingtonians by law enforcement agencies.** It's a practice that disproportionately impacts communities of color and immigrants who have difficulties navigating the American legal system.

The Institute for Justice [graded Washington state a D-](#) for its police seizure laws:

- **Washington has a low bar to forfeit and no conviction is required.**
- **90% of forfeiture proceeds are retained by law enforcement.**
- **No conviction is required to seize assets.**

Ensuring that an order of property seizure is supported by substantial evidence "is particularly important in the forfeiture context because an individual may lose valuable property even where no drug crime has actually been committed, and because the government has **a strong financial incentive to seek forfeiture because the seizing law enforcement agency is entitled to keep or sell most forfeited property.**"

- [Washington State Supreme Court](#)

Statewide Poverty Action Network is working with organizers, advocates, and lawmakers committed to significantly curtailing police seizures and support efforts to:

- Remove the material incentive police have to seize property by requiring that 90% of the value of assets seized must be turned over to the State Treasurer.
- Prevent those never convicted of crimes from having their assets seized.
- Forward the value of assets seized to a fund for restorative justice organizations in Washington State.