

State of Hawaii

Department of the Attorney General



**ANNUAL REPORT
OF PROCEEDINGS UNDER THE HAWAII
OMNIBUS CRIMINAL FORFEITURE ACT**

Fiscal Year 2002-2003

*Submitted to
The Twenty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2004*

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INTRODUCTION

In 1988, the Legislature enacted chapter 712A, Hawaii Revised Statutes (“HRS”), the Hawaii Omnibus Criminal Forfeiture Act (“chapter 712A”). Chapter 712A provides for the forfeiture of property used or acquired in connection with the commission of certain criminal offenses and for the distribution of the property, or its proceeds, to law enforcement agencies for law enforcement purposes. Pursuant to section 712A-10, HRS, the Department of the Attorney General processes petitions for administrative forfeiture of personal property valued at less than \$100,000, or of any vehicle or conveyance regardless of value, but does not handle forfeiture of real property. A prosecuting attorney commences judicial forfeiture proceedings concerning real property or personal property valued in excess of \$100,000 by filing a petition for forfeiture in the circuit court. In a case initiated as an administrative forfeiture, a person who owns or otherwise has a legal interest in seized property can obtain judicial review of a case by timely filing a claim and bond with the Attorney General.

Pursuant to section 712A-16, HRS, the Attorney General distributes administratively or judicially forfeited property, and the sale proceeds thereof, to law enforcement agencies and other local or state government entities for law enforcement purposes. Forfeited currency and the proceeds of sales of forfeited property are distributed according to a specific formula. The agency that seized the property and the prosecutor that filed the petition each received a 25 percent share. The remaining 50 percent is deposited into the Criminal Forfeiture Fund administered by the Attorney General. The Attorney General expends moneys from the Criminal Forfeiture Fund to defray administrative expenses incurred in processing forfeiture cases, to maintain and store property seized, to train law enforcement officers, to provide grants to law enforcement agencies, or to accomplish other purposes more specifically outlined in section 712A-16(4), HRS.

Originally enacted for a two-year trial period, chapter 712A was extended for three years in 1990 and again in 1993. Act 104, Session Law of Hawaii 1996, made chapter 712A permanent with an effective date of June 12, 1996. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of chapter 712A, the Attorney General, pursuant to section 712A-16(6), HRS, is required to report to the Legislature “on the use of the Hawaii omnibus criminal forfeiture act during the fiscal year preceding the legislative session.” Section 712A-16(6) requires the report to include the following information:

- (a) The total amount and type of property seized by law enforcement agencies;
- (b) The total number of administrative and judicial actions filed by prosecuting attorneys and the disposition thereof;
- (c) The total number of claims or petitions for remission or mitigation filed in administrative actions and the dispositions thereof;
- (d) The total amount and type of property forfeited and the sale proceeds thereof;
- (e) The total amount and type of property distributed to units of state and local government;
- (f) The amount of money deposited into the criminal forfeiture fund; and
- (g) The amount of money expended by the Attorney General from the criminal forfeiture fund and the reason for the expenditures.

This report conforms with the above requirements and also explains the use of asset forfeiture as a law enforcement tool. In addition, information regarding fiscal years ending June 30, 2001 and 2002 is presented for comparison purposes.

I.

HISTORY OF ASSET FORFEITURE

Forfeiture has been used, literally since ancient times, to take property wrongfully used or acquired. References to forfeiture in the Old Testament¹ and Greek² and Roman³ law indicate that its purpose was to exact a penalty against property which had been used or acquired in connection with some type of prohibited conduct. In modern times, forfeiture is used to protect the public from harmful products – adulterated food, sawed-off shotguns, and the property of criminal enterprise.⁴

The first statute authorizing civil forfeiture, which provides for forfeiture of property whether or not there is any criminal prosecution, was enacted by Congress in 1789 as a sanction for the use of ships in customs violations.⁵ In 1978, Congress expanded the law to permit forfeiture of all money used in, or acquired from, the illegal drug trade⁶ and authorized the forfeiture of real property in 1984.⁷

¹ Exodus 21:28: “If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall surely be stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit.”

² Aeschines, quoted in O. Holmes, The Common Law (1881): “[W]e banish beyond our borders sticks and stones and steal, voiceless and mindless things, if they chance to kill a man; and if a man commits suicide, bury the hand that struck the blow afar from the body.”

³ 7 Twelve Tables 1, translated in 1 Scott, The Civil Law, 69 (1932): “If a quadruped causes injury to anyone, let the owner tender him the estimated amount of the damage; and if he is unwilling to accept it, the owner shall...surrender the animal that caused the injury.”

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, Drug Agents Guide to Forfeiture of Assets 3 (1987 Revision and Supp. 1990).

⁵ Act of July 31, 1789, sections 12, 36; 1 Stat. 39, 47.

⁶ 21 U.S.C. section 881(a)(6).

⁷ 21 U.S.C. section 853.

The first statutes authorizing criminal forfeiture, which require prosecution and conviction of a criminal defendant before property can be forfeited, were enacted by Congress in 1970⁸ and upheld by the United States Supreme Court as constitutional in 1974.⁹ Federal civil and criminal forfeiture statutes now reach substantially the same offenses and type of property. All fifty states and the District of Columbia now have some type of civil and/or criminal forfeiture statute in effect.¹⁰

These statutes have allowed law enforcement to expand its efforts beyond merely arresting and prosecuting criminals to allow it to seize the assets used in, and obtained from, the commission of criminal offenses. As a result, criminals are deprived of their working capital and their profits, thereby preventing them from operating even where traditional criminal sanctions have not otherwise deterred them. Forfeiture is particularly useful in attacking highly organized criminal enterprises where obtaining convictions means only mandatory retirement for the organization's leaders and promotion for the subordinates with no impact on the activities of the organization itself.

A secondary benefit of forfeiture laws is that forfeited property, or the proceeds of its sale, has been turned over to law enforcement and is used to fight against crime. While the purpose of forfeiture and the evaluation of a forfeiture law or program should never be based solely on the generation of revenue, it is only fitting that forfeited property be used to combat those who seek to profit from crime.

⁸ 18 U.S.C. sections 1962 and 1963; 21 U.S.C. section 848.

⁹ Calero-Toledo v. Pearson Yacht Leasing Co., 416 U.S. 663, 94 S. Ct. 2080, 40 L. Ed. 2d 452 (1974).

¹⁰ National Criminal Justice Association, Asset Seizure & Forfeiture: Developing and Maintaining A State Capability, App. A (1988).

II.

ASSET FORFEITURE UNDER STATE LAW

Before 1988, there was no uniform forfeiture law in the State of Hawaii. Instead, there were forfeiture provisions governing certain property and certain offenses in the Conservation and Resources Enforcement Program (section 199-7, HRS), Uniformed Controlled Substances Act (section 329-55, HRS), the Organized Crime statute (chapter 842, HRS), and the Penal Code (section 701-119, HRS). Without uniform legislation, there was no uniform approach to forfeiture. Worse, the forfeiture statute was criminal only and cases could be closed only after completion of often long-delayed criminal proceedings. This was clearly unsatisfactory.

Civil forfeiture proceedings are preferable because they are instituted against the property, not its owner, and forfeiture is not dependent on the outcome of any criminal proceedings against the owner. Indeed, the property is the “defendant” in civil forfeiture proceedings because it has in some way facilitated the commission of an offense or constitutes the proceeds of one. For example, when a drug dealer or bank robber uses a get-away car, that car is subject to forfeiture because of its connection with the criminal activity.

In 1988, the Law Enforcement Coalition, consisting of the Attorney General and the four county prosecutors and police chiefs proposed that a new, uniform forfeiture law be enacted. This effort is now codified as chapter 712A, HRS, and represents a combination of federal forfeiture law, the forfeiture act adopted by the State of Arizona in 1986, and the provisions of Hawaii’s various laws relating to forfeiture. The purpose was to create a law that would be both procedurally and substantively comprehensive and, to the extent possible, uniform across the State. Chapter 712A provides for administrative forfeitures and judicial forfeitures against individuals and property. Chapter 712A also provides for forfeitures of substitute assets from convicted criminals where the assets originally subject to forfeiture have been secreted or otherwise dissipated or disposed of.

Chapter 712A also significantly expands the number and kinds of offenses which give rise to forfeiture. At the same time, it provides explicit procedural and substantive rights to claimants, especially innocent owners. The Legislature also placed a ceiling of \$3,000,000 per year on the amount of forfeited property, which could be retained by law enforcement, with any excess going into the state general fund. Distribution of forfeited property up to the ceiling is administered by the Attorney General according to the specific criteria of section 712A-16, HRS. In 1990, the Legislature amended chapter 712A to require an annual report on its use and the disposition of property forfeited pursuant to it. In 1996, the Legislature amended chapter 712A through Act 104, Session Laws of Hawaii 1996, to make the state forfeiture law permanent.

III.

ADMINISTRATIVE FORFEITURE

Perhaps the most important advantage afforded by chapter 712A is a provision by which forfeiture of personal property worth less than \$100,000, or forfeiture of any vehicle or conveyance, regardless of value, is administratively processed. Previously, all forfeitures were handled through judicial proceedings, resulting in the consumption of judicial resources even where the forfeiture was uncontested.

Under section 712A-10, HRS, a prosecuting attorney files a petition for administrative forfeiture of seized property with the Department of the Attorney General. Persons who own or otherwise have an interest in seized property (“claimants”), have thirty days to respond from the date they receive notice of the pending forfeiture by publication, personal service, or mail, whichever occurs first. Claimants may file a Petition for Remission or Mitigation of Forfeiture, which does not challenge the sufficiency of evidence supporting the forfeiture or the actions of any government official. Instead, the petitioner asks the Attorney General to invoke the executive power to “pardon” the property, in whole or in part, because of extenuating or mitigating circumstances not otherwise

amounting to a legal defense to forfeiture. Depending on the circumstances, the Attorney General may pardon the property in its entirety and “remit” (return) it to the claimants or “mitigate” the forfeiture by returning the property on payment of a fine.

Alternatively, the claimant can file a claim which asserts under oath that the property is not subject to forfeiture and which requests that the forfeiture be removed to court for judicial review. Except for persons who are indigent, claimants must also post a cost bond equal to 10 percent of the estimated value of the seized property or \$2,500, whichever is greater. The purpose of the cost bond is to ensure that, if the claimant frivolously removes the forfeiture action to court, expenses incurred by the State in judicially prosecuting the forfeiture will be borne by the claimant, with the bond serving as security.

Finally, the claimant may do nothing, in which case forfeiture is ordered after expiration of thirty days.

By these means, forfeiture proceedings can be disposed of administratively without unnecessary consumption of valuable judicial resources while still providing those who want their “day in court” the opportunity to challenge the forfeiture.

IV.

DISTRIBUTION OF PROCEEDS

Once property has been forfeited to the State through administrative or judicial proceedings, the Attorney General is charged with disposing of it pursuant to section 712A-16, HRS. Pursuant to section 712A-16(1), HRS, the Attorney General may transfer forfeited property, such as automobiles, to State and county agencies; may sell property by public sale; may pay valid claims against forfeited property, and, may destroy contraband or raw materials or equipment used to manufacture controlled substances.

Pursuant to section 712A-16(2), HRS, the Attorney General distributes a 25 percent share of forfeited currency and sale proceeds of forfeited property, if any, to both the agency which seized the property and the prosecuting attorney which initiated the administrative or judicial forfeiture proceeding. The remaining 50 percent of the forfeited currency, or sale proceeds, if any, is deposited into the Criminal Forfeiture Fund, which is administered by the Attorney General. Pursuant to section 712A-16(4), HRS, the Department of the Attorney General distributes money from the Criminal Forfeiture Fund to law enforcement agencies and prosecuting attorneys as requests are made.

Property and money distributed pursuant to section 712A-16, HRS, must be used for law enforcement purposes and may be used to supplement, but not supplant, funds regularly appropriated to law enforcement agencies. For example, the strong emphasis has been placed on spending money from the Criminal Forfeiture Fund to meet the training and education needs of law enforcement personnel. In fiscal year 2002-2003, a total of \$235,111.35 was earmarked from the Criminal Forfeiture Fund for 65 training requests for training in fiscal year 2003-2004 or the latter part of fiscal year 2002-2003.

V.

ASSET FORFEITURE: FY 2002-2003

A. Total Seizures

“Total seizures” in fiscal year 2002-2003 were valued at an estimated \$1,906,619.¹¹ The type and amount of property comprising this total is listed by seizing agency in the following table:

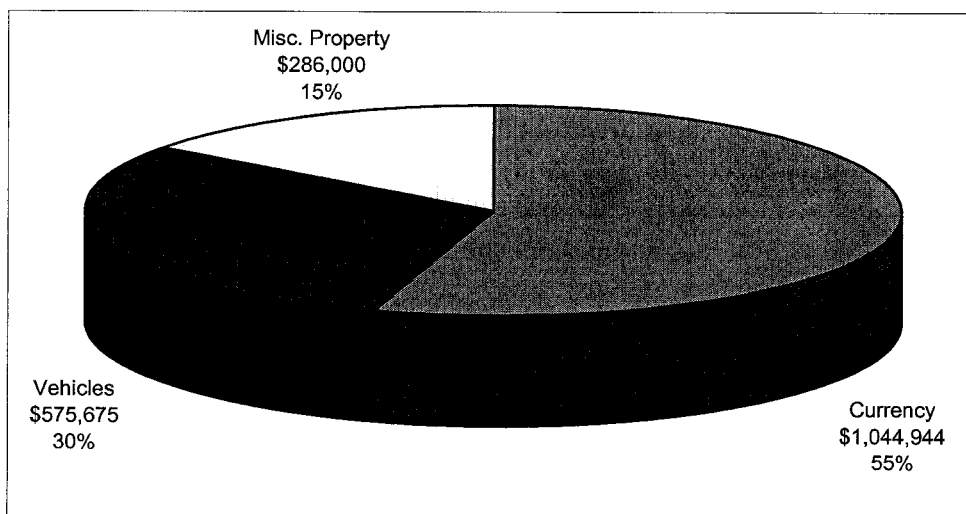
¹¹ In this context, “total seizures” is taken to mean “total seizures for forfeiture,” as distinguished from seizure for evidentiary purposes. “Seizure for forfeiture means seizure of property by a law enforcement officer coupled with an assertion by the seizing agency or by a prosecuting attorney that the property is subject to forfeiture.” Section 712A-1, HRS. Because the prosecuting attorney may elect not to initiate forfeiture proceedings against property seized for evidentiary purposes, total seizures as used in this effort means total seizures in a given year for which forfeiture proceedings were undertaken.

TOTAL SEIZURES BY SEIZING AGENCY
Fiscal Year Ending 6/30/03

<u>Seizing Agency</u>	<u>Currency</u>	<u>Vehicles</u>	<u>Misc. Property</u>	<u>Total</u>
Hawaii Police Dept.	\$ 92,552	\$ 209,195	\$ 41,389	\$ 343,136
Honolulu Police Dept.	663,609	292,300	241,404	1,197,313
Maui Police Dept.	194,305	50,535	0	244,840
Kauai Police Dept.	88,542	6,000	750	95,292
Narcotics Enforcement Dept.	4,973	0	0	4,973
Dept. of Land & Natural Res.	0	14,245	2,157	16,402
Attorney General	963	3,400	300	4,663
Total	<u>\$1,044,944</u>	<u>\$575,675</u>	<u>\$286,000</u>	<u>\$1,906,619</u>

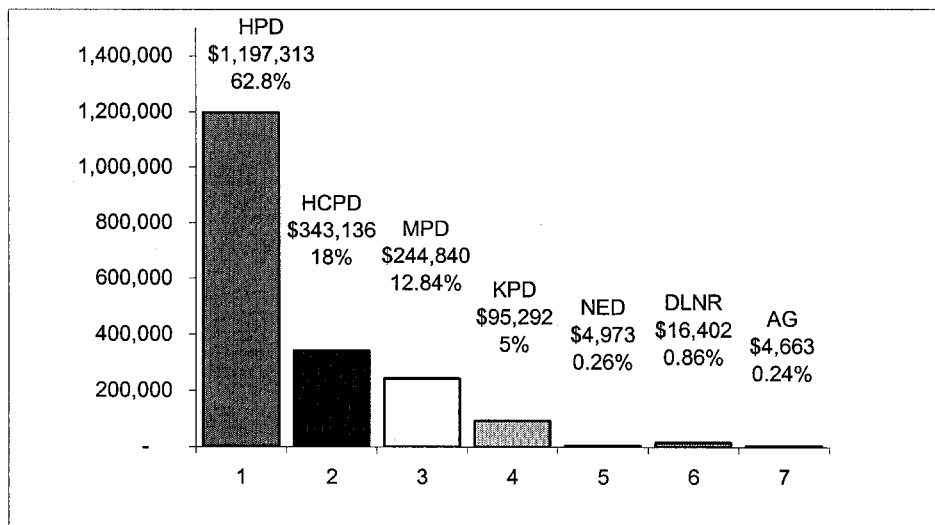
The total amount of seized property is broken down by type of property and is reflected in the following table:

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PROPERTY SEIZED
REPRESENTED BY TYPE OF PROPERTY
For the fiscal year ending 6/30/03



The total amount of seized property is broken down by seizing agency in the following table:

**PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PROPERTY SEIZED
REPRESENTED BY THE RESPECTIVE AGENCIES**
For the fiscal year ending 6/30/03



The following table compares seizures by type of property, in fiscal years 1998-1999 through 2002-2003:

TOTAL SEIZURES: PROPERTY TYPE
Fiscal years ending June 30, 1999 through 2003

	<u>6/30/1999</u>	<u>6/30/2000</u>	<u>6/30/2001</u>	<u>6/30/2002</u>	<u>6/30/2003</u>
CURRENCY	\$ 1,038,048	\$ 580,461	\$ 660,328	\$ 645,537	\$ 1,044,944
VEHICLES	465,510	689,445	978,007	487,147	575,675
MISC. PROPERTY	520,014	358,801	456,332	876,188	286,000
TOTAL SEIZURES	\$ 2,023,572	\$ 1,628,707	\$ 2,094,667	\$ 2,008,872	\$ 1,906,619

B. Forfeiture Actions Filed

In fiscal year 2002-2003, 291 Petitions for Administrative Forfeiture were filed by the prosecuting attorneys with the Department of the Attorney General.¹² In fiscal year 2002-2003, 209 cases were processed. Of the 209 processed cases, 74 were filed and processed within fiscal year 2002-2003, and the other 135 cases were pending cases from previous fiscal years. Of the 209 cases,

¹² "Prosecuting Attorney means the prosecuting attorney or deputy prosecuting attorneys of the various counties, or the attorney general or deputy attorneys general when engaged in the prosecuting of a criminal offense." section 712A-1, HRS. All figures stated for total forfeiture actions filed include those filed both by deputy prosecuting attorneys and deputy attorneys general.

171 involved uncontested forfeiture; persons with an interest in the property did not respond to the notice of pending forfeiture. Petitions for Remission or Mitigation were involved in 30 of the 209 processed cases; 6 cases involved judicial proceedings; and 3 cases were voluntarily withdrawn by the prosecutor.

C. Total Number of Claims and Petitions for Remission or Mitigation

In fiscal year 2002-2003, 11 claims seeking judicial review were filed in administrative forfeiture actions. These claims were referred to the respective prosecuting attorneys to determine whether, pursuant to section 712A-10(9), HRS, the claim should be honored or the forfeiture action should be brought to court for judicial resolution. At the close of fiscal year 2002-2003, 4 of these claims had been settled with the approval of the court and/or the Attorney General, or voluntarily withdrawn by the prosecuting attorney, and 7 were still in litigation.

In fiscal year 2002-2003, 42 Petitions for Remission or Mitigation were filed. At the closed of fiscal year 2002-2003, 13 of these Petitions for Remission or Mitigation had been resolved and 29 were still pending inquiry by the Department of the Attorney General pursuant to section 712A-10(6) and (7), HRS.

D. Property Forfeited

The estimated value of all property forfeited in fiscal year 2002-2003 was \$949,877, including \$561,015, in currency. A portion of the forfeited vehicles and miscellaneous property was sold at public auctions held on September 21, 2002; November 23, 2002; February 15, 2003; and June 21, 2003. The net proceeds from the auctions were \$43,318.10; \$32,751.25; \$25,593.00; and \$47,354.50, respectively. Firearms forfeited to the State are not auctioned as a matter of policy, primarily for public safety considerations. To reintroduce forfeited firearms into general circulation would be inimical to public safety and the law enforcement objectives promoted by section 124-12.5, HRS. The type and amount of property forfeited in fiscal year 2002-2003 is listed by jurisdiction in the following table:

TOTAL FORFEITURES BY JURISDICTION
Fiscal Year Ending 6/30/03

<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Currency</u>	<u>Vehicles</u>	<u>Misc. Property</u>	<u>Total</u>
Hawaii County	\$ 62,279	\$ 44,275	\$ 5,540	\$112,094
City & County of Honolulu	296,380	144,475	184,339	625,194
Maui County	110,271	4,850	4,383	119,504
Kauai County	87,026	1,000	0	88,026
Narcotics Enforcement	5,059	0	0	5,059
Dept. of Land & Natural Res.	0	0	0	0
Attorney General	0	0	0	0
Total	<u>\$561,015</u>	<u>194,600</u>	<u>194,262</u>	<u>\$949,877</u>

The following table compares total forfeitures, by type of property, in fiscal years 1998-1999 through 2002-2003:

TOTAL FORFEITURES: PROPERTY TYPE
Fiscal years ending June 30, 1999 through 2003

	<u>6/30/1999</u>	<u>6/30/2000</u>	<u>6/30/2001</u>	<u>6/30/2002</u>	<u>6/30/2003</u>
CURRENCY	\$ 741,225	\$ 555,715	\$ 450,945	\$ 503,762	\$ 561,015
VEHICLES	271,309	343,550	536,040	564,173	194,600
MISC. PROPERTY	362,809	224,071	207,033	547,110	194,262
TOTAL SEIZURES	<u>\$ 1,375,343</u>	<u>\$ 1,123,336</u>	<u>\$ 1,194,018</u>	<u>\$ 1,615,045</u>	<u>\$ 949,877</u>

E. Property Distributed

In fiscal year 2002-2003, a total of \$371,485 in forfeited currency and auction proceeds was distributed to the police departments and prosecuting attorneys of the City and County of Honolulu, and to the counties of Hawaii, Maui, and Kauai, as well as to the Narcotics Enforcement Division of

the Department of Public Safety, the Department of the Attorney General, pursuant to section 712A-16(2), HRS.

In fiscal year 2002-2003, forfeited property, other than currency, including vehicles, video cassette recorders, a laptop computer, and a safe, with an estimated value of \$70,095 was transferred to the Honolulu Police Department, Hawaii County Police Department, Kauai County Police Department, and Maui County Police Department, as well as to the Narcotics Enforcement Division of the Department of Public Safety and the Department of the Attorney General, pursuant to section 712A-16(2), HRS.

F. Criminal Forfeiture Fund

In fiscal year 2002-2003, \$999,942.06 was deposited into the Criminal Forfeiture Fund.¹³ As explained above, law enforcement agencies received a total of \$371,485 in forfeited currency and auction proceeds pursuant to sections 712A-16(2) and 712A-16(4), HRS. As explained below, \$439,298.05 was expended for training of law enforcement personnel, law enforcement equipment costs, as well as operation of the forfeiture program pursuant to section 712A-16(4), HRS.

G. Criminal Forfeiture Fund Expenditures

In fiscal year 2002-2003, the Department of the Attorney General expended \$439,298.05 from the Criminal Forfeiture Fund. The type, amount, and explanation for the expenditure are listed below:

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Explanatory Notes</u>
Training	\$ 235,667.32	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 45th and 46th Ann International L.E.I.U Training Seminar• SANS Cyber Defense Initiative West Course• 16th Ann National Technical Investigators' Assn Conference & Technology Exhibition• 12th Ann Asian Peace Officers' Assn Training Conference

¹³ The Criminal Forfeiture Fund is a ledger account maintained by the Attorney General which shows the amount of money available for distribution pursuant to section 712A-16, HRS.

Training (continued)

- National Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Conference
- 15th Ann San Diego Conference on Responding to Child & Family Maltreatment
- Reid Method of Criminal Interviews & Interrogation
- American Polygraph Assn 2002 37th Ann Seminar/Workshop
- Homicide Investigator's Course
- Understanding Extreme Violence – Domestic & Foreign Terrorism, & School Threat Management
- Tactical Tracking Operations School
- Tactical Tracking Operations School, Lev II
- Aggressive Driving Symposium
- Techno-Fraud 2001 Training Conference
- 50th Ann Training Seminar of the Western States
- Safe & Burglary Investigators' Assn
- Computer Network Investigator Training Program
- International Money Laundering Conference
- International Money Laundering Conference & Asset Forfeiture Training Program
- 2nd Pacific Rim "War on Ice"
- Advanced Vehicle Stop Tactics
- 84th International Assn for Identification's Education Conference
- Footwear Impression Evidence for Examiners Course
- Advanced Law Enforcement Training Camp 2001
- Ann Training Conference Enforcement Firearms Instructors
- Pacific Rim Money Laundering & Financial Crimes Conference
- 3rd Ann Inter-County Detective Training Seminar
- 13th Ann Symposium on Human Identification
- Motor Vehicle ID & Auto Theft Symposium
- Crime Scene Technology 2 Course
- 14th Ann Colonel Henry F. Williams Homicide Seminar

Training (continued)

- Advanced Tactical Training
- Tactical Commander Course
- Hostage Rescue Operation Course
- CA Narcotics Officers' Assn 34th Ann Training Institute Conference
- Forensic Concerns for Criminal Investigations & Processing of Crime Scenes
- Five-Day Police Sniper Class
- Post Blast Investigation Techniques Training
- Hostage Negotiations & Crisis Intervention Training
- New Fire/Arson Investigator Academy
- Crimes Against Children Conference
- Advanced Practical Homicide Investigation Training
- ASLET 2003 Conference
- Presentation on Academics & Academies
- Americans for Effective Law Enforcement Workshop on Discipline & Internal Investigations
- Use of Force Simulation Training Class
- Law Enforcement Training Camp
- 2001 National Technical Investigators' Assn 28th Ann. Symposium on Crime Laboratory Development
- 17th Annual Conference on Child & Family Maltreatment

Equipment	\$ 2,293.66	Asset Forfeiture Program computer; software
Newspaper Publication of Legal Notice	\$ 17,289.34	Notice of pending forfeiture
Upkeep/Storage of Forfeited Assets	\$ 3,176.40	Alarm system operation and utilities; towing of vehicles; equipment; real property upkeep
Auction Expenditures	\$ 13,051.70	Automotive repair and parts; overtime payments; shipping and towing of vehicles; auctioneer services
Lien Payment Expenditures & Compromise	\$ 3,608.98	Payments to financial institutions for release of lien placed on forfeited vehicles; fees and costs associated with the compromise of claims
Payroll Expenditures for the Asset Forfeiture Unit	\$ 162,879.64	Asset Forfeiture Program manager, legal assistant and secretary salaries; related payroll taxes
Other Operating Expenditures	<u>\$ 1,330.92</u>	Phone charges; office supplies; petty cash replenishment
TOTAL:	<u>\$ 439,298.05</u>	

VI.

ASSET FORFEITURE DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

During fiscal year 2002-2003, 291 petitions for administrative forfeiture of property having an estimated value of \$1,906,619 were filed with the Department of the Attorney General. Those numbers compare favorably with a four year average of 275 petitions having an estimated value of \$1,909,851. A review of the cases filed during the first four months of fiscal year 2003-2004, indicates that filings for fiscal year 2003-2004 will probably meet or exceed the four year average.

During fiscal year 2002-2003, 209 forfeiture cases involving property having an estimated value of \$949,877 were closed. The total number of cases closed did not keep pace with filings because the paralegal position in the Asset Forfeiture Unit of the Department of the Attorney General was effectively vacant for three months resulting in some delay in processing of cases that could have been closed.

Our new paralegal Cheryl A. Wong brings a wealth of experience and exceptional computer skills to her new position with the Asset Forfeiture Unit. Ms. Wong has implemented document management programs that will dramatically accelerate the processing of administrative forfeiture cases during fiscal year 2003-2004 and beyond. Further, the Asset Forfeiture Unit anticipates that a system allowing for the electronic filing of petitions related to administrative forfeiture will be in place sometime in fiscal year 2004-2005 and will accelerate the processing of administrative forfeiture cases while reducing labor costs.

In response to the information needs of the public, in March 1998, the asset forfeiture program went on-line as a part of the Attorney General's web page on the Internet. Auction information, including pictures of items to be sold at auction, is now available on the Internet at www.state.hi.us/ag.

Since January 1, 1998, auctions of forfeited property are held at least once each quarter. This fiscal year auctions were held on September 21, 2002, November 23, 2002, February 15, 2003, and June 21, 2003. The fiscal year 2003-2004 auction schedule is September 27, 2003, December 6, 2003, March 20, 2004, and June 12, 2004. By holding auctions every quarter and maintaining a regular schedule of auctions, we reduce storage costs and value depreciation, increase public participation in asset forfeiture auctions, increase auction proceeds, and expand the ability of the Criminal Forfeiture Fund to meet the needs of law enforcement agencies for training funds and funds for crime prevention programs.

VII.

CONCLUSION

The permanent enactment of the Hawaii Omnibus Criminal Forfeiture Act by the Legislature in 1996 has had a positive impact on the handling and processing of administrative forfeitures. Fiscal year 2002-2003 was an excellent year for administrative forfeitures revenues when compared to historical norms. We expect that fiscal year 2003-2004 forfeiture revenues will meet or exceed historical norms.