

**State of Hawaii**  
**Department of the Attorney General**



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

**Fiscal Year 2006-2007**

*Submitted to*  
*The Twenty-Fourth State Legislature*  
*Regular Session of 2008*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
I. HISTORY OF ASSET FORFEITURE .....	3
II. ASSET FORFEITURE UNDER STATE LAW.....	5
III. ADMINISTRATIVE FORFEITURE .....	6
IV. DISTRIBUTION OF PROCEEDS .....	8
V. ASSET FORFEITURE: FY 2006-2007 .....	9
A. Total Seizures .....	9
B. Forfeiture Actions Filed.....	11
C. Total Number of Claims and Petitions for Remission or Mitigation.....	12
D. Property Forfeited.....	12
E. Property Distributed.....	14
F. Criminal Forfeiture Fund .....	15
G. Criminal Forfeiture Fund Expenditures .....	15
VI. ASSET FORFEITURE DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS .....	16
VII. CONCLUSION .....	17

## 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 receives 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.

Section 712A-16(6), HRS, requires the Attorney General 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, 2003 through 2006 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 Testament,<sup>1</sup> Greek<sup>2</sup> and Roman<sup>3</sup> 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 and the property of criminal enterprise.<sup>4</sup>

The first statute authorizing civil forfeiture, was enacted by Congress in 1789 as a sanction for the use of ships in customs violations.<sup>5</sup> In 1978, Congress expanded the law to permit forfeiture of all money used in, or acquired from, the illegal drug trade<sup>6</sup> and authorized the forfeiture of real property in 1984.<sup>7</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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."

<sup>2</sup> 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."

<sup>3</sup> 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."

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

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

<sup>6</sup> 21 U.S.C. section 881(a)(6).

<sup>7</sup> 21 U.S.C. section 853.

criminal forfeiture statute in effect.<sup>8</sup>

As a result, criminals are deprived of their working capital and their profits, thereby preventing them from operating. 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.

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<sup>8</sup> National Criminal Justice Association, Asset Seizure & Forfeiture: Developing and Maintaining A State Capability, App. A (1988).

## II.

### ASSET FORFEITURE UNDER STATE LAW

In 1988, a 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 further amended chapter 712A and made 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 2006-2007, a total of \$211,755.52 was earmarked from the Criminal Forfeiture Fund for 24 training requests for training in fiscal year 2007-2008 or the latter part of fiscal year 2006-2007.

V.

**ASSET FORFEITURE: FY 2006-2007**

A. Total Seizures

“Total seizures” in fiscal year 2006-2007 were valued at an estimated \$1,783,607.<sup>9</sup> All forfeited property, including contraband, is given an estimated value by the seizing agency. The actual value is the sales proceeds of a particular forfeited property. The estimated value of total seizures for forfeiture includes contraband and property found to be unsafe or in poor condition that are eventually destroyed. Contraband includes untaxed tobacco, firearms, and gambling machines. The type and amount of property comprising this total are listed by the seizing agency in the following table:

**TOTAL SEIZURES BY SEIZING AGENCY**  
Fiscal Year Ending 6/30/07 (Estimated Values)

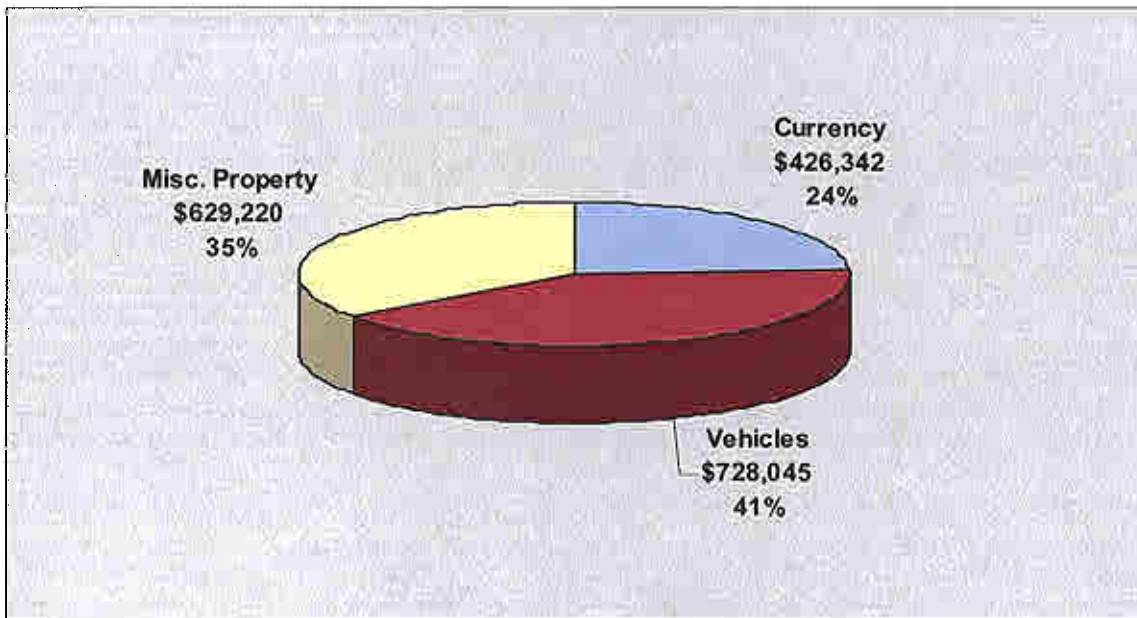
<u>Seizing Agency</u>	<u>Currency</u>	<u>Vehicles</u>	<u>Misc. Property</u>	<u>Total</u>
Honolulu Police Dept.	\$ 173,128	\$ 439,665	\$ 82,891	\$ 695,684
Hawaii County Police Dept.	151,517	127,970	542,879	822,366
Kauai Police Dept.	59,605	40,435	3,320	103,360
Maui Police Dept.	36,777*	0*	0	36,777*
Narcotics Enforcement Dept. of Land & Natural Res.	5,316	47,500	0	52,816
	0	72,475	130	72,605
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>\$426,342</u></b>	<b><u>\$728,045</u></b>	<b><u>\$629,220</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,783,607</u></b>

<sup>9</sup> 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,” as defined in 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.

\*Seizure of \$118,050 in currency & \$12,550 in vehicles totaling \$130,600 filed administratively; dismissed because administrative forfeiture estimated total value must be less than \$100,000 pursuant to section 712A-10, HRS.

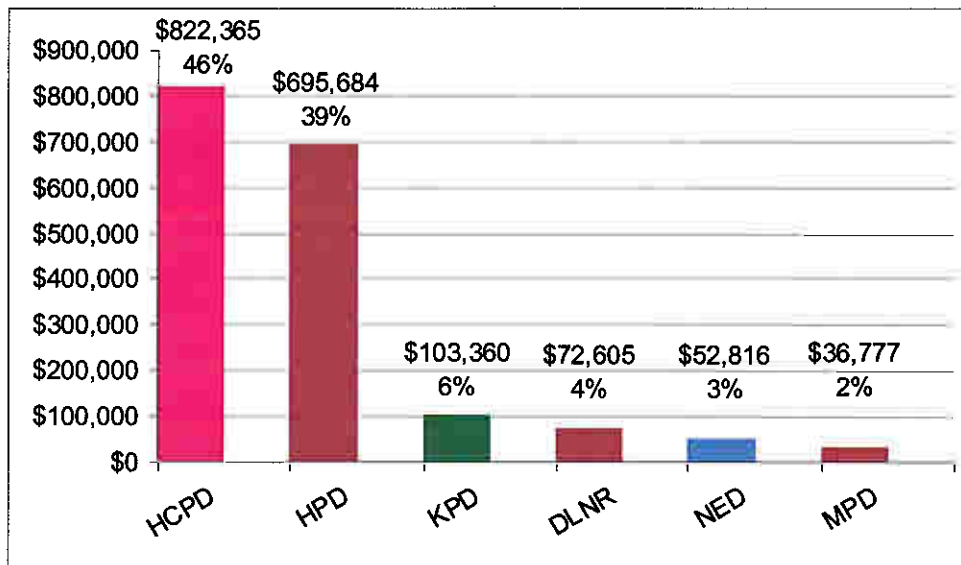
The total amount of seized property is broken down by type of property and is reflected in the following table:

**PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PROPERTY SEIZED  
REPRESENTED BY TYPE OF PROPERTY  
For the fiscal year ending 6/30/07 (Estimated Values)**



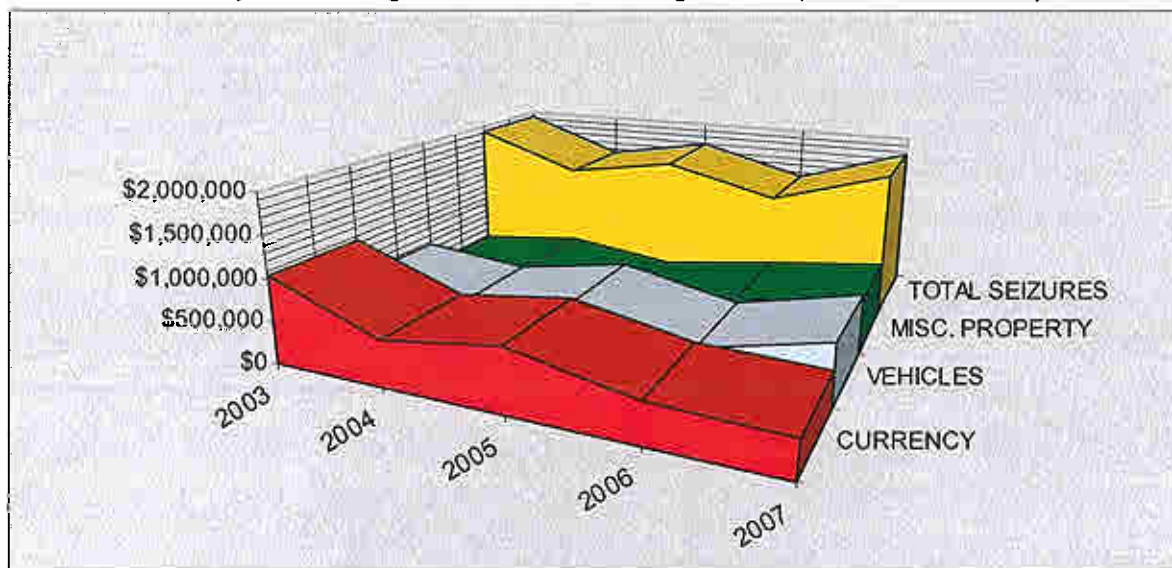
The total amount of seized property is broken down by seizing agency in the following table:

**PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PROPERTY SEIZED  
REPRESENTED BY THE RESPECTIVE AGENCIES  
For the fiscal year ending 6/30/07 (Estimated Values)**



The following table compares seizures by type of property, in fiscal years 2002-2003 through 2006-2007:

**TOTAL SEIZURES: PROPERTY TYPE**  
Fiscal years ending June 30, 2003 through 2007 (Estimated Values)



	<u>6/30/2003</u>	<u>6/30/2004</u>	<u>6/30/2005</u>	<u>6/30/2006</u>	<u>6/30/2007</u>
CURRENCY	\$1,044,945	\$555,125	\$745,983	\$471,706	\$426,342
VEHICLES	\$575,675	\$461,947	\$682,180	\$401,720	\$728,045
MISC. PROPERTY	\$285,999	\$429,066	\$252,816	\$465,685	\$629,220
<b>TOTAL SEIZURES</b>	<u>\$1,906,619</u>	<u>\$1,446,138</u>	<u>\$1,680,979</u>	<u>\$1,339,111</u>	<u>\$1,783,607</u>

**B. Forfeiture Actions Filed**

In fiscal year 2006-2007, 246 Petitions for Administrative Forfeiture were filed by the

prosecuting attorneys with the Department of the Attorney General.<sup>10</sup> In fiscal year 2006-2007, 270 cases were processed. Of the 270 processed cases, 113 were filed and processed within fiscal year 2006-2007, and the other 157 cases were pending cases from previous fiscal years. Of the 270 cases, 221 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 270 processed cases; 11 cases involved judicial proceedings; and 8 cases were voluntarily withdrawn by the prosecutor.

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

In fiscal year 2006-2007, 9 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 2006-2007, 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 5 were still in litigation.

In fiscal year 2006-2007, 34 Petitions for Remission or Mitigation were filed. At the close of fiscal year 2006-2007, 32 of these Petitions for Remission or Mitigation had been resolved and 2 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 2006-2007 was \$1,405,284, including \$636,598, in currency. A portion of the forfeited vehicles and miscellaneous property was sold at public auctions held on September 30, 2006; December 9, 2006; February 10, 2007; and May

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<sup>10</sup> "Prosecuting Attorney" in this context 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," as defined in section 712A-1, HRS. All figures stated for total forfeiture actions filed include those filed both by deputy prosecuting attorneys and deputy attorneys general.

12, 2007. The net proceeds from the auctions were \$66,542.75; \$76,826.50; \$54,254.50; and \$25,707.00, respectively.

Contraband, which includes untaxed tobacco, firearms, and gambling machines, were destroyed and not auctioned. 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 134-12.5, HRS.

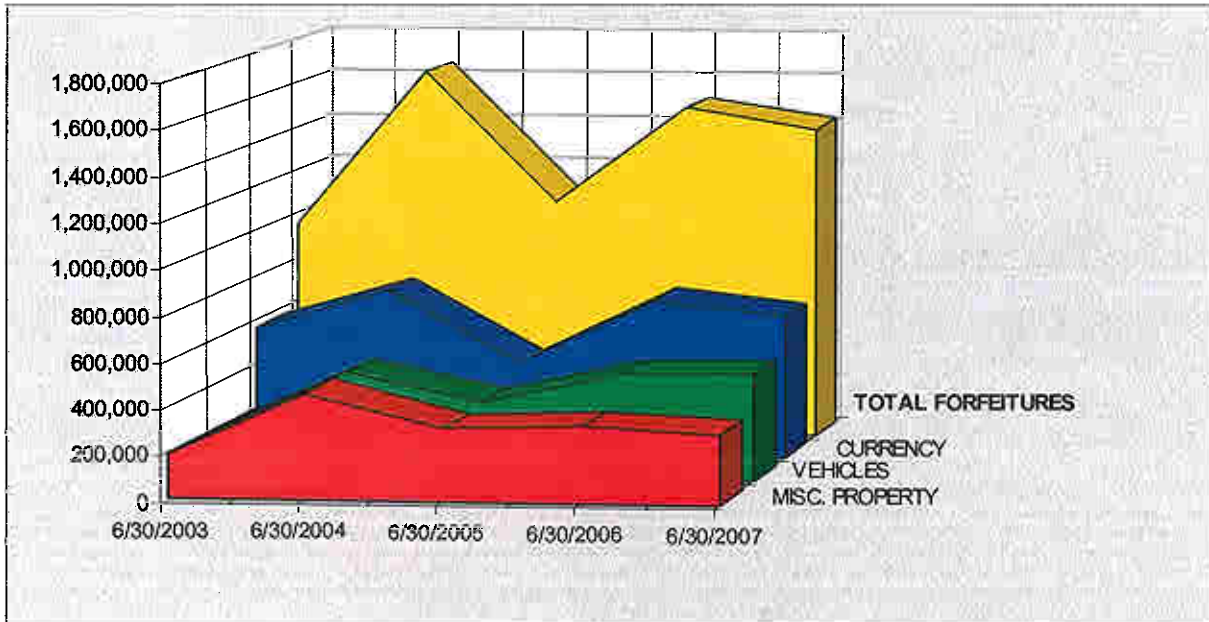
Forfeited property may be destroyed if found to be unsafe or in poor condition.

The type and amount of property forfeited in fiscal year 2006-2007 is listed by jurisdiction in the following table:

<b>TOTAL FORFEITURES BY JURISDICTION</b>				
Fiscal Year Ending 6/30/07 (Estimated Values)				
<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Currency</u>	<u>Vehicles</u>	<u>Misc. Property</u>	<u>Total</u>
City & County of Honolulu	\$ 346,939	\$ 242,720	\$ 198,714	\$ 788,373
Hawaii County	224,349	105,715	86,134	416,198
Kauai County	48,703	29,000	15,548	93,251
Maui County	15,095	3,855	0	18,950
Narcotics Enforcement	1,512	20,000	0	21,512
Dept. of Land & Natural Res.	0	67,000	0	67,000
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>\$ 636,598</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 468,290</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 300,396</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,405,284</u></b>

The following table compares total forfeitures, by type of property, in fiscal years 2002-2003 through 2006-2007:

**TOTAL FORFEITURES: PROPERTY TYPE**  
Fiscal years ending June 30, 2003 through 2007 (Estimated Values)



	<u>6/30/2003</u>	<u>6/30/2004</u>	<u>6/30/2005</u>	<u>6/30/2006</u>	<u>6/30/2007</u>
CURRENCY	561,015	737,668	414,395	698,035	636,598
VEHICLES	194,600	457,792	332,230	460,855	468,290
MISC. PROPERTY	194,262	461,625	316,627	334,709	300,396
<b>TOTAL FORFEITURES</b>	<b>949,877</b>	<b>1,657,085</b>	<b>1,063,252</b>	<b>1,493,599</b>	<b>1,405,284</b>

**E. Property Distributed**

In fiscal year 2006-2007, a total of \$426,397 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, and the Conservation and Resources Enforcement Division of the Department of Land and Natural Resources, pursuant to section 712A-16(2), HRS.

In fiscal year 2006-2007, forfeited property, other than currency, including vehicles, a boat and boat trailer, TV, projector, digital camera, air compressor, gun safe, and computers with an estimated value of \$82,610 was transferred to the Honolulu Police Department, Hawaii County Police Department, the Conservation and Resources Enforcement Division of the Department of



Land and Natural Resources, and the Asset Forfeiture Unit of the Department of the Attorney General, pursuant to section 712A-16(2), HRS.

F. Criminal Forfeiture Fund

In fiscal year 2006-2007, \$947,590.12 was deposited into the Criminal Forfeiture Fund.<sup>11</sup> As explained above, law enforcement agencies received a total of \$426,397 in forfeited currency and auction proceeds pursuant to section 712A-16(2) and (4), HRS. As explained below, \$360,079.04 was expended for training of law enforcement personnel and 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 2006-2007, the Department of the Attorney General expended \$360,079.04 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	\$92,640.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2006 United Council on Welfare Fraud (UCOWF) Conference &amp; Board of Directors Meeting</li> <li>● Criminal Trial Practice Conference</li> <li>● Integrated Information Sharing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workshop</li> <li>● 2006 and 2007 Sexual Assault Multi-Disciplinary training</li> <li>● 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Crimes Against Children Conference</li> <li>● National Institute on the Prosecution of Domestic Violence</li> <li>● Basic Prosecutor training</li> <li>● Basic Field Officer Training Officer Seminar</li> <li>● Glock Armorers Certification training</li> <li>● National Tactical Operations Conference</li> <li>● 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Inter-County Detective Training Seminars</li> </ul>

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

Equipment	\$ 22,790.81	Asset Forfeiture Program Forklift; Prosecutor computer, notebook, pocket PC, PDA, software, projector, digital imaging, and data storage equipment
Newspaper Publication of Legal Notice	\$ 12,800.46	Notice of pending forfeiture
Upkeep/Storage of Forfeited Assets	\$ 2,899.53	Alarm system operation and utilities; towing of vehicles; equipment; real property upkeep
Auction Expenditures	\$ 18,700.13	Automotive repair and parts; overtime payments; shipping and towing of vehicles; auctioneer services
Lien Payment Expenditures & Compromise	\$ 13,609.11	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	\$ 195,492.56	Asset Forfeiture Program manager, legal assistant and secretary salaries; related payroll taxes
Other Operating Expenditures	\$ 1,146.32	Phone charges; office supplies; petty cash replenishment
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b><u>\$ 360,079.04</u></b>	

## VI.

### ASSET FORFEITURE DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS

During fiscal year 2006-2007, 246 petitions for administrative forfeiture of property having an estimated value of \$1,783,607 were filed with the Department of the Attorney General. Those numbers compare closely with a four-year average of 291 petitions having an estimated value of \$1,590,302. A review of the cases filed during the first four months of fiscal year 2007-2008, indicates that filings for fiscal year 2007-2008 will probably meet or exceed the four-year average.

During fiscal year 2006-2007, 272 forfeiture cases involving property having an estimated value of \$1,405,284 were closed.

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, are now available on the Internet at

[http://hawaii.gov/ag/criminal\\_justice/asset/auction\\_information/index.html](http://hawaii.gov/ag/criminal_justice/asset/auction_information/index.html).

Since January 1, 1998, auctions of forfeited property are held at least once each quarter. This fiscal year auctions were held on September 30, 2006, December 9, 2006, February 10, 2007, and May 12, 2007. The fiscal year 2007-2008 auction schedule is August 25, 2007, December 1, 2007, February 23, 2008, and May 3, 2008.

## **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. We expect that fiscal year 2007-2008 forfeiture revenues will meet or exceed historical norms.