

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

FILE NUMBER: H.F. 1081
Version: As introduced

DATE: March 18, 2013

Authors: Allen and others

Subject: Forfeiture; innocent owners

Analyst: Rebecca Pirius, 651.296.5044

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Overview

This bill shifts the burden of proof to the prosecutor in innocent owner cases involving the following forfeiture actions: off-highway vehicles, DWI, designated offenses, controlled substance offenses, fleeing offenses, and prostitution offenses. It also allows an owner to reclaim a vehicle if equipped with an ignition interlock device.

Section

- 1, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14** **Presumptions; limitations on forfeiture.** Strikes language regarding innocent owner provisions found in the following forfeiture statutes: off-highway vehicles, DWI, designated offenses, controlled substance offenses, fleeing offenses, and prostitution offenses. These provisions are modified and consolidated under sections 6 and 7.
- 2** **Bond by owner for possession.** Amends the DWI forfeiture statute. Provides that, pending the forfeiture action, the seized vehicle shall be returned to the owner upon posting of security if a disabling device is attached or an ignition interlock device is attached. Allows the ignition interlock option only if the owner has valid driving privileges. Makes it a misdemeanor to tamper with or bypass the ignition interlock.
- 5** **Definitions.** Defines “willfully blind” as intentionally avoiding knowledge of a crime by failing to make a reasonable inquiry about suspected wrongdoing despite being aware of its high probability. (See §§ 6 & 7.)
- 6** **Limitations and defenses to forfeiture; ownership at time of the crime.** Modifies current limitations and defenses to forfeiture actions and consolidates the new standards in sections 6 and 7.

Section

Provides that property is not presumed subject to forfeiture if a claimant presents prima facie evidence that the claimant: (1) had full or joint ownership in the property and (2) is not the person accused or convicted of the related crime (i.e., an innocent owner), unless the prosecutor meets its burden under paragraph (c).

Paragraph (c) provides that property is subject to forfeiture if the prosecutor proves by a preponderance of the evidence that the claimant is not an innocent owner – the claimant (1) had actual knowledge of, or was willfully blind to, the crime, or (2) consented or was privy to the crime.

Notwithstanding paragraph (c), the property is not subject to forfeiture if the claimant demonstrates by a preponderance of the evidence that the claimant took reasonable steps to prohibit, abate, or terminate the illegal use of the property, including immediately notifying law enforcement, revoking or attempting to revoke permission to use property, or taking reasonable steps in consultation with law enforcement to discourage or prevent unlawful use.

Defines “claimant” as: an owner, lessor, secured party, common carrier, or good faith purchaser for value.

- 7** **Limitations and defenses; ownership acquired after crime.** Creates new standards similar to those in section 6 for property acquired *after* the crime for a good faith purchaser.
- 8** **Return of property; fees and sanctions.** Provides that if property is found not subject to forfeiture under section 6 or 7, the property must be returned to the owner, as well as filing fees. If the court finds that a DWI offender would have access to the vehicle, the court may order the owner to install an ignition interlock device (not to exceed one year). Makes it a misdemeanor to tamper with or circumvent an ignition interlock device.
- 9** **Exemption; homestead property.** Codifies and extends the *Torgelson* exemption for homestead property in controlled substance and designated offense forfeitures.