



February 1, 2018

Chairman John Culberson
 Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
 and Related Agencies
 House Committee on Appropriations
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member José Serrano
 Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
 and Related Agencies
 House Committee on Appropriations
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Richard Shelby
 Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
 and Related Agencies
 Senate Committee on Appropriations
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Jeanne Shaheen
 Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
 and Related Agencies
 Senate Committee on Appropriations
 Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Support for the Civil Forfeiture Amendments in Final Appropriations Bill

Dear Chairmen Culberson and Shelby and Ranking Members Serrano and Shaheen:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations dedicated to the protection of private property, civil liberties, and civil rights, we write to urge you to ensure that the House-passed amendments regarding civil forfeiture be included in the year-long appropriations bill that you are currently finalizing.

On September 12, 2017, the House adopted three amendments to H.R. 3354 relating to civil forfeiture. Each amendment had the same purpose: to reverse a recent decision by the Department of Justice that undermines the states and localities that have chosen to provide greater protections to citizens through their own forfeiture policies, and that unwinds important reforms to federal forfeiture that had been implemented in 2015. These bipartisan amendments were adopted by voice vote after several speeches in favor, with **no House Members speaking in opposition**, and are now reflected at sections 551, 552, and 553 of that bill.

This overwhelming statement from the House is not surprising. Current civil forfeiture practices are deeply unpopular with the public, and there is strong bipartisan support for reform. These House appropriations amendments did not attempt full reform, but instead were crafted narrowly to address the DOJ's recent policy reversal. The amendments did not abolish civil forfeiture completely—though many of our organizations would support such a change—but they did represent a positive step that will prevent the federal government from hindering state-level reforms.

We submit that there is a policy consensus within the legislative branch that reform is needed, and that the best, first step is the inclusion of those amendments in the law. The House of Representatives has spoken clearly through its unanimous adoption of these amendments, and we are not aware of a single U.S. Senator who has spoken in support of the DOJ policy shift. To that point, **please find attached bipartisan letters** from congressional leaders working on civil forfeiture reform urging you to include these amendments in the final legislation.

Thank you, and we look forward to seeing a final appropriations bill that includes the forfeiture amendments previously passed by the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

The Institute for Justice	American Conservative Union
American Civil Liberties Union	Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
American Commitment	Drug Policy Alliance
Americans for Prosperity	Campaign for Liberty
Concerned Veterans for America	The DKT Liberty Project
FreedomWorks	Freedom Partners
The Goldwater Institute	Generation Opportunity
The Justice Action Network	Law Enforcement Action Partnership
The Libre Initiative	NAACP
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers	National Taxpayers Union
R Street Institute	

ATTACHMENTS: House Member 11/6/2017 letter to Reps. Culberson and Serrano
Senator 11/7/2017 letter to Senators Shelby and Leahy

cc: Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen, House Appropriations Committee
Ranking Member Nita Lowey, House Appropriations Committee
Chairman Thad Cochran, Senate Appropriations Committee
Ranking Member Pat Leahy, Senate Appropriations Committee
Speaker Paul Ryan
House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer