

## **Law enforcement agencies report \$12 million from federal asset forfeiture**

Tim Curtis

June 7, 2016

Federal asset forfeiture netted 155 Missouri law enforcement agencies a total of more than \$12 million in 2015, a report by the state auditor's office shows.

Missouri law enforcement agencies are required by state law to report participation in federal asset forfeiture programs to the state auditor and the Department of Public Safety. The program allows local agencies who participate in federal asset seizures to retain a proportional percentage of the profits.

According to the Department of Justice, asset forfeiture is “a nationwide law enforcement initiative that removes the tools of crime from criminal organizations, deprives wrongdoers of the proceeds of their crimes, recovers property that may be used to compensate victims, and deters crime.”

While that's how the DOJ describes asset forfeiture, the report compiled all forfeitures under federal programs last year. Assets seized from forfeiture programs can only be used by the law enforcement agencies.

The practice of civil asset forfeiture has come under scrutiny in the last several years, with organizations ranging from the [ACLU](#) to the [Cato Institute](#) and the [Heritage Foundation](#) criticizing the practice. Even in states that outlaw civil asset forfeiture, local law enforcement agencies can profit through federal programs.

The state auditor's report only includes broad numbers because they were not required to do an audit of the assets seized or the departments that seized them. The office released a similar report for asset forfeiture at the state level in February.