



June 14, 2017

Support Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform in Pennsylvania

On behalf of our activist community in Pennsylvania, I urge you to contact your representatives and ask them to support the Senate Bill 8, introduced by Sen. Mike Folmer (R-Lebanon). This bill, which passed the state Senate in April, would transform current civil asset forfeiture procedure in Pennsylvania to better protect private property and due process.

If passed SB 8 would raise the standard of proof to clear and convincing evidence and require the government to prove that the property was illegally used. Shifting the burden to the government, upholds the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. This is a crucial step in protecting Pennsylvanians' civil liberties.

A September 2015 survey showed that nearly 80 percent of Pennsylvania voters, including 75 percent of Republicans, say that the Commonwealth's forfeiture laws are in need of reform. This bill would bring long overdue private property protections against unjust seizures by implementing protections for individuals – many of whom are not arrested, charged or convicted – who were merely suspected of criminal activity along with individuals who under certain circumstances require their property to avoid undue hardship.

This bill would also increase transparency between the police and public by reporting annually the amount of property seized and if it was tied to criminal activity. The Attorney General would be required to submit a report to the General Assembly disclosing forfeiture profits annually.

Section 1 of the Pennsylvania Constitution states that “[a]ll men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent and indefeasible rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring, possessing and protecting property and reputation, and of pursuing their own happiness.”

FreedomWorks supports the passage of SB 8 and the passage of this bill is necessary to uphold private property and due process rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Brandon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks