




Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

October 16, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL 

SUBJECT: Leadership and Management of the Department's Asset Forfeiture Program

The Asset Forfeiture Program is one of the most effective tools Congress has provided the Department of Justice to fight crime, combat cartels and other transnational criminal organizations, and take the profit out of crime. Therefore, we must continue to lead and oversee the Asset Forfeiture Program on behalf of the public we serve in a responsible and effective way, and with the highest level of professionalism, integrity, and fairness. My order of July 19, 2017, was issued to advance these goals.

The Asset Forfeiture Program has proven to be extremely valuable to law enforcement in our country, but it has received certain criticisms. Accordingly, I am hereby directing you to create the position of Director of Asset Forfeiture Accountability ("Director") within the Office of the Deputy Attorney General to review and coordinate all aspects of the Department's Asset Forfeiture Program. The Director will be expected to work with appropriate Department components on ensuring compliance with my previously issued order as well as to receive, promptly review, and take appropriate action relating to any complaints concerning the Department's conduct of asset forfeiture that may arise from judges, attorneys, defendants, or other sources. The Director will also gather such data and make such recommendations as will advance the integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the program.

The Director should be a senior attorney with relevant experience. Consistent with the recent Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-17-22 (April 12, 2017), the Director will be responsible for developing recommendations for how the resources and activities of the Asset Forfeiture Program should be restructured, streamlined, or merged to better accomplish the Department's asset forfeiture operations. The Director should begin work expeditiously on coordinating priority initiatives and recommendations, including modernizing the 2008-2012 National Asset Forfeiture Strategic Plan; updating the Asset Forfeiture Program's policy guidance; establishing more uniform procedures for documenting and processing forfeiture actions; and improving controls over use of program funds.

The American people and Congress must know this program is being administered professionally, lawfully, and in a manner consistent with sound public policy. This program represents a critical part of the essential and growing partnership between state, local, and federal law enforcement officers. Our law enforcement partners at all levels know that seizures and forfeitures of the instrumentalities and proceeds of drug traffickers, transnational criminal organizations, and violent street gangs are central to how we fight crime. The Director of Asset Forfeiture Accountability will ensure that the Asset Forfeiture Program is effectively and responsibly managed so that the Department of Justice can continue to use this important tool to dismantle the underpinnings of these criminal enterprises.