

# License to Steal: The Forfeiture of Property



**The government has a long history of seizing property from its citizens without due process.**

In recent years, this practice has become increasingly common, as law enforcement agencies have turned to forfeiture laws to supplement their budgets. These laws allow the government to seize property that is allegedly connected to a crime, even if the owner is never charged or convicted of a crime.

This practice is a violation of the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures. It is also a violation of the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment, which guarantees that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.



## A License to Steal: The Forfeiture of Property

by Leonard W. Levy

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 1263 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 288 pages



**Despite these constitutional protections, forfeiture laws have been upheld by the courts.**

In 1996, the Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. James Daniel Good Real Property* that the government could seize property that was used to facilitate a drug crime, even if the owner was not involved in the crime.

This ruling has opened the door to widespread abuse of forfeiture laws. Law enforcement agencies now routinely seize property from innocent people, without any evidence that the property was used in a crime.

**The consequences of forfeiture for innocent people can be devastating.**

In many cases, forfeiture can lead to the loss of a person's home, car, or other valuable property. This can have a crippling impact on a person's life, making it difficult to find a place to live, get to work, or support their family.

Forfeiture can also be used to target political dissidents and activists. By seizing the property of these individuals, the government can silence them

and prevent them from exercising their First Amendment rights.

**The forfeiture laws are a dangerous and unconstitutional tool that is being used to deprive innocent people of their property.**

The practice of forfeiture must be reformed to protect the rights of innocent Americans.

**Here are some things that can be done to reform the forfeiture laws:**

- Require the government to prove that property was used in a crime before it can be seized.
- Provide innocent owners with due process protections, including the right to a hearing before their property can be seized.
- Limit the use of forfeiture to cases where the property is worth more than a certain amount of money.
- Create a fund to compensate innocent people who have had their property seized.
- Repeal the civil asset forfeiture laws that allow the government to seize property without charging the owner with a crime.

By taking these steps, we can help to ensure that the government does not continue to violate the rights of innocent Americans.



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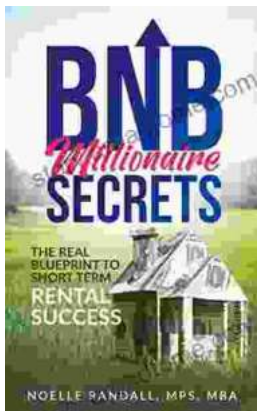
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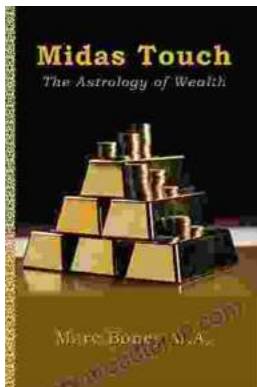
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