

Cherokee Nation Code Annotated

Title 21: Crimes and Punishments

Part VII. Crimes Against Property

Chapter 70: Other Offenses Against Property Rights

§ 2002. Seizure and forfeiture procedures--Claims—Liens--Proceeds

Cite as: 21 CNCA § 2002

A. Any commissioned peace officer of this Nation is authorized to seize any currency, negotiable instrument, monetary instrument, equipment or property used or involved in, used to facilitate, delivered from or traceable to a violation of 21 CNCA § 2001. The seized item may be held as evidence until a forfeiture has been declared or a release ordered.

Forfeiture actions under this section may be brought by the Attorney General in the Cherokee Nation District Court; provided, in the event the Attorney General elects not to file such action, or fails to file such action within ninety (90) days of the date of the seizure of the item, the item shall be returned to the owner.

B. Notice of seizure and intended forfeiture proceeding shall be filed in the office of the clerk of the Cherokee Nation District Court and shall be given all owners and parties in interest.

C. Notice shall be given according to one of the following methods:

1. Upon each owner, lienholder, or party in interest whose name and address is known, served in the manner of service of process in civil cases prescribed by the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure; or

2. Upon all other owners, whose addresses are unknown, but who are believed to have an interest in the property, by one publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the county where the seizure was made.

D. Within sixty (60) days after the mailing or publication of the notice, the owner of the property and any other party in interest or claimant may file a verified answer and claim to the item described in the notice of seizure and of the intended forfeiture proceeding.

E. If at the end of sixty (60) days after the notice has been mailed or published there is no verified answer on file, the court shall hear evidence upon the fact of the unlawful use and may order the item forfeited to the Nation, if such fact is proven.

F. If a verified answer is filed, the forfeiture proceeding shall be set for hearing.

G. Proceedings under this section shall be special proceedings.

H. At the hearing the petitioner shall prove by a preponderance of the evidence that property was used in the attempt or commission of an act specified in subsection A of this section with knowledge by the owner of the item.

I. The claimant of any right, title, or interest in the item may prove the lien, mortgage, or conditional sales contract to be bona fide and that the right, title, or interest created by the item was created without any knowledge or reason to believe that the item was being, or was to be, used for the purpose charged.

J. In the event of such proof, the court may order the item released to the bona fide or innocent owner, lienholder, mortgagee, or vendor if the amount due such person is equal to, or in excess of, the value of the item as of the date of the seizure, it being the intention of this section to forfeit only the right, title, or interest of the purchaser.

K. If the amount due to such person is less than the value of the item, or if no bona fide claim is established, the item may be forfeited to the Nation and may be sold pursuant to judgment of the court as on sale upon execution, and as provided in 21 CNCA § 2506. except as otherwise provided for by law.

L. A seized item taken or detained pursuant to this section shall not be repleviable, but shall be deemed to be in the custody of the petitioner or in the custody of the law enforcement agency. The petitioner shall release the seized item to the owner of the item if it is determined that the owner had no knowledge of the illegal use of the item or if there is insufficient evidence to sustain the burden of showing illegal use of the item. If the owner of the property stipulates to the forfeiture and waives the hearing, the petitioner may determine if the value of the item is equal to or less than the outstanding lien. If such lien exceeds the value of the item, the item may be released to the lienholder. A seized item which has not been released by the petitioner shall be subject to the orders and decrees of the court.

M. Attorney fees shall not be assessed against the Cherokee Nation or the petitioner for any actions or proceeding pursuant to this section.

N. The proceeds of the sale of any property shall be distributed as follows, in the order indicated:

1. To the bona fide or innocent purchaser, conditional sales vendor, or mortgagee of the item, if any, up to the amount of the interest of that person in the property, when the court declaring the forfeiture orders a distribution to such person;
2. To the payment of the actual reasonable expenses of preserving the item;

3. To the victim of the crime to compensate the victim for any loss incurred as a result of the act for which the item was forfeited; and

4. The balance to a revolving fund in the office of the county treasurer of the county wherein the property was seized, to be distributed as follows: one-half (1/2) to the investigating law enforcement agency and one-half (1 /2) to the Attorney General to be used to defray any lawful expenses of the office of the Attorney General. If the petitioner is not the Attorney General, then the one-half (1/2) which would have been designated to that office shall be distributed to the petitioner.

O. If the court finds that the item was not used in the attempt or commission of an act specified in subsection A of this section and was not an item subject to forfeiture pursuant to subsection B of this section, the court shall order the item released to the owner as the right title, or interest as determined by the court.

P. No vehicle, airplane, or vessel used by a person as a common carrier in the transaction of business as a common carrier shall be forfeited pursuant to the provisions of this section unless it shall be proven that the owner or other person in charge of such conveyance was a consenting party or privy to the attempt or commission of an act specified in subsection A or B of this section. No item shall be forfeited pursuant to the provisions of this section by reason of any act or omission established by the owner thereof to have been committed or omitted without the knowledge or consent of such owner, and by any person other than such owner while the item was unlawfully in the possession of a person other than the owner in violation of the criminal laws of the Cherokee Nation, the United States, or of any state.

Q. Whenever any item is forfeited pursuant to this section, the court may order that the forfeited item may be retained for its official use by the Cherokee Nation or the law enforcement agency which seized the item.

Historical Data

LA 29-21, eff. June 18, 2021.