

**Act No. 53 (S.102). Crimes and criminal procedures;, animal fighting; forfeiture**

**An act relating to forfeiture of property associated with animal fighting and certain regulated drug possession, sale, and trafficking violations**

This act prohibits possession of animal fighting paraphernalia, makes various changes to the forfeiture statutes in Title 18, allows law enforcement use appropriations, grants, or donations to carry out motor vehicle forfeitures under Title 23, and creates an Animal Cruelty Task Force to improve the State's response to animal cruelty complaints. The changes to the forfeiture statutes include:

- amending the scope of property subject to forfeiture to include property seized pursuant to a violation of the animal fighting statutes and violations of the regulated drug statutes that carry a penalty of ten years' incarceration or greater
- requiring either a conviction of the underlying violation or an agreement with the prosecutor in order for property to be subject to a judicial forfeiture proceeding
- adding an innocent owner defense to the forfeiture statute
- after payment of expenses and liens, distributing 45 percent of the proceeds from forfeited property among the prosecutors and law enforcement and the remaining 55 percent to the General Fund

Effective Date: July 1, 2015