September 7, 2017

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the Civil Forfeiture Amendments to H.R. 3354
YES on Walberg/Cohen #46
YES on Raskin/Sensenbrenner #67
YES on Amash/Sanford #70

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations dedicated to the protection of civil liberties and private property, we write to urge you to SUPPORT THE CIVIL FORFEITURE AMENDMENTS to H.R. 3354, the appropriations bill currently pending on the floor of the House of Representatives. Those amendments include Walberg/Cohen #46,
Raskin/Sensenbrenner #67, and Amash/Sanford #70. All three of these amendments should receive votes late tonight.

These civil forfeiture amendments have been offered on a bipartisan basis in order to prevent the unjustified expansion of civil forfeiture and to ensure that the protections for innocent property owners that were put in place in 2015 are restored and remain in place. These amendments do not abolish civil forfeiture completely—though many of our organizations would support such a change—but they do represent a positive step that will prevent the federal government from undermining state-level reform.

The current civil forfeiture system undermines property rights and is fundamentally unjust. Law enforcement can confiscate property from citizens and businesses without any criminal conviction or even criminal charges. Once their property has been seized, ordinary Americans must navigate a system that is stacked against them. For example, property owners must prove they are “not guilty,” turning the fundamental presumption of innocence on its head.

The Department of Justice recently announced that it would expand the use of civil forfeiture, reversing the ban on so-called “adoptive” seizures. These adoptive seizures allow state and local law enforcement to use federal forfeiture laws to circumvent state-law limitations, undermining the states and communities that you represent. This new policy is an affront to basic principles of federalism, and it should not be funded by American taxpayers.

Thank you for your attention, and thank you for voting YES on Walberg/Cohen #46, Raskin/Sensenbrenner #67, and Amash/Sanford #70.

Sincerely,

The Institute for Justice
American Civil Liberties Union
American Commitment
Americans for Forfeiture Reform
Campaign for Liberty
The Daniel Project
Freedom Partners
Generation Opportunity
Justice Action Network
The Libre Initiative
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
R Street Institute

American Conservative Union
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
Drug Policy Alliance
Americans for Prosperity
Concerned Veterans for America
The DKT Liberty Project
FreedomWorks
The Goldwater Institute
The Law Enforcement Action Partnership
NAACP
Our America Initiative