

New Mexico Ended Civil Forfeiture —And Law Enforcement Remained Effective.

Other States and the Federal Government Should Follow Its Example.

In 2015, New Mexico abolished civil forfeiture and replaced it with criminal forfeiture. It also directed all forfeiture proceeds to the state's general fund, instead of law enforcement coffers. Opponents of reform predicted it would lead to more crime as police were purportedly less able to combat it.

In reality, New Mexico's reform had no such ill effects. A peer-reviewed study by the Institute for Justice (IJ) published in *Criminal Justice Review* used nine years of monthly crime rate data from the FBI to analyze the reform's impact and found:

1. Ending civil forfeiture did not affect overall crime or arrest rates in New Mexico.

If civil forfeiture helped protect the public, New Mexico's overall crime rate should have increased following reform. And if police needed forfeiture proceeds to fight crime, the state's overall arrest rate should have decreased. Yet New Mexico showed no change in its crime or arrest rates relative to neighboring states with no forfeiture reforms.

2. Ending civil forfeiture did not affect arrest rates for property and violent crimes or police manpower in New Mexico.

The IJ study also looked at property and violent crime arrest rates specifically and the number of law enforcement personnel. Both of these should have decreased if New Mexico's reform had left law enforcement under-resourced. Yet New Mexico again showed no changes relative to neighboring states with no forfeiture reforms.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Civil forfeiture reforms do *not* result in less law enforcement.

Lawmakers can end civil forfeiture without putting the public at risk.

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END CIVIL
FORFEITURE



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