§ 1311. Forfeiture actions. 1. A civil action may be commenced by the appropriate claiming authority against a criminal defendant to recover the property which constitutes the proceeds of a crime, the substituted proceeds of a crime, an instrumentality of a crime or the real property instrumentality of a crime. A civil action may be commenced against a non-criminal defendant to recover the property which constitutes the proceeds of a crime, the substituted proceeds of a crime, an instrumentality of a crime, or the real property instrumentality of a crime provided, however, that a judgment of forfeiture predicated upon clause (A) of subparagraph (iv) of paragraph (b) of subdivision three of this section shall be limited to the amount of the proceeds of the crime. Any action under this article must be commenced within five years of the commission of the crime and shall be civil, remedial, and in personam in nature and shall not be deemed to be a penalty or criminal forfeiture for any purpose. Except as otherwise specially provided by statute, the proceedings under this article shall be governed by this chapter. An action under this article is not a criminal proceeding and may not be deemed to be a previous prosecution under article forty of the criminal procedure law.

(a) Actions relating to post-conviction forfeiture crimes. An action relating to a post-conviction forfeiture crime must be grounded upon a conviction of a felony defined in subdivision five of section one thousand three hundred ten of this article or upon a count of an indictment or information alleging a felony which was dismissed at the time of a plea of guilty to a felony in satisfaction of such count. A court may not grant forfeiture until such conviction has occurred. However, an action may be commenced, and a court may grant a provisional remedy provided under this article, prior to such conviction having occurred. An action under this paragraph must be dismissed at any time after sixty days of the commencement of the action unless the conviction upon which the action is grounded has occurred, or an indictment or information upon which the asserted conviction is to be based is pending in a superior court. An action under this paragraph shall be stayed during the pendency of a criminal action which is related to it; provided, however, that such stay shall not prevent the granting or continuance of any provisional remedy provided under this article or any other provisions of law.

(b) Actions relating to pre-conviction forfeiture crimes. An action relating to a pre-conviction forfeiture crime need not be grounded upon conviction of a pre-conviction forfeiture crime, provided, however, that if the action is not grounded upon such a conviction, it shall be necessary in the action for the claiming authority to prove the commission of a pre-conviction forfeiture crime by clear and convincing evidence. An action under this paragraph shall be stayed during the pendency of a criminal action which is related to it; provided, that upon motion of a defendant in the forfeiture action or the claiming authority, a court may, in the interest of justice and for good cause, and with the consent of all parties, order that the forfeiture action proceed despite the pending criminal action; and provided that such stay shall not prevent the granting or continuance of any provisional remedy provided under this article or any other provision of law.

2. All defendants in a forfeiture action brought pursuant to this article shall have the right to trial by jury on any issue of fact.

3. In a forfeiture action pursuant to this article the following burdens of proof shall apply:

(a) In a forfeiture action commenced by a claiming authority against a criminal defendant, except for those facts referred to in paragraph (b) of subdivision nine of section one thousand three hundred ten and paragaph (b) of subdivision one of this section which must be proven by clear and convincing evidence, the burden shall be upon the claiming authority to prove by a preponderance of the evidence the facts necessary to establish a claim for forfeiture.

(b) In a forfeiture action commenced by a claiming authority against a non-criminal defendant:

(i) in an action relating to a pre-conviction forfeiture crime, the burden shall be upon the claiming authority to prove by clear and convincing evidence the commission of the crime by a person, provided, however, that it shall not be necessary to prove the identity of such person.

(ii) if the action relates to the proceeds of a crime, except as provided in subparagraph (i) hereof, the burden shall be upon the claiming authority to prove by a preponderance of the evidence the facts

necessary to establish a claim for forfeiture and that the non-criminal defendant either (A) knew or should have known that the proceeds were obtained through the commission of a crime, or (B) fraudulently obtained his or her interest in the proceeds to avoid forfeiture.

(iii) if the action relates to the substituted proceeds of a crime, except as provided in subparagraph (i) hereof, the burden shall be upon the claiming authority to prove by a preponderance of the evidence the facts necessary to establish a claim for forfeiture and that the non-criminal defendant either (A) knew that the property sold or exchanged to obtain an interest in the substituted proceeds was obtained through the commission of a crime, or (B) fraudulently obtained his or her interest in the substituted proceeds to avoid forfeiture.

(iv) if the action relates to an instrumentality of a crime, except as provided for in subparagraph (i) hereof, the burden shall be upon the claiming authority to prove by a preponderance of the evidence the facts necessary to establish a claim for forfeiture and that the non-criminal defendant either (A) knew that the instrumentality was or would be used in the commission of a crime or (B) knowingly obtained his or her interest in the instrumentality to avoid forfeiture.

(v) if the action relates to a real property instrumentality of a crime, the burden shall be upon the claiming authority to prove those facts referred to in subdivision four-b of section thirteen hundred ten of this article by clear and convincing evidence. The claiming authority shall also prove by a clear and convincing evidence that the non-criminal defendant knew that such property was or would be used for the commission of specified felony offenses, and either (A) knowingly and unlawfully benefitted from such conduct or (B) voluntarily agreed to the use of such property for the commission of such offenses by consent freely given. For purposes of this subparagraph, a non-criminal defendant knowingly and unlawfully benefits from the commission of a specified felony offense when he derives in exchange for permitting the use or occupancy of such real property by a person or persons committing such specified offense a substantial benefit that would otherwise not accrue as a result of the lawful use or occupancy of such real property. "Benefit" means benefit as defined in subdivision seventeen of section 10.00 of the penal law.

(c) In a forfeiture action commenced by a claiming authority against a

non-criminal defendant the following rebuttable presumptions shall apply:

(i) a non-criminal defendant who did not pay fair consideration for the proceeds of a crime, the substituted proceeds of a crime or the instrumentality of a crime shall be presumed to know that such property was the proceeds of a crime, the substituted proceeds of a crime, or an instrumentality of a crime.

(ii) a non-criminal defendant who obtains an interest in the proceeds of a crime, substituted proceeds of a crime or an instrumentality of a crime with knowledge of an order of provisional remedy relating to said property issued pursuant to this article, shall be presumed to know that such property was the proceeds of a crime, substituted proceeds of a crime, or an instrumentality of a crime.

(iii) in an action relating to a post-conviction forfeiture crime, a non-criminal defendant who the claiming authority proves by clear and convincing evidence has criminal liability under section 20.00 of the penal law for the crime of conviction or for criminal activity arising from a common scheme or plan of which such crime is a part and who possesses an interest in the proceeds, the substituted proceeds, or an instrumentality of such criminal activity is presumed to know that such property was the proceeds of a crime, the substituted proceeds of a crime, or an instrumentality of a crime.

(iv) a non-criminal defendant who participated in or was aware of a scheme to conceal or disguise the manner in which said non-criminal obtained his or her interest in the proceeds of a crime, substituted proceeds of a crime, or an instrumentality of a crime is presumed to know that such property was the proceeds of a crime, the substituted proceeds of a crime, or an instrumentality of a crime.

(d) In a forfeiture action commenced by a claiming authority against a defendant, the following rebuttable presumption shall apply: all currency or negotiable instruments payable to the bearer shall be presumed to be the proceeds of a pre-conviction forfeiture crime when such currency or negotiable instruments are (i) found in close proximity to a controlled substance unlawfully possessed by the defendant in an amount sufficient to constitute a violation of section 220.18 or 220.21 of the penal law, or (ii) found in close proximity to any quantity of a controlled substance unlawfully possessed by such defendant in a room,

other than a public place, under circumstances evincing an intent to unlawfully mix, compound, distribute, package or otherwise prepare for sale such controlled substance.

(e) The presumption set forth pursuant to paragraph (d) of this subdivision shall be rebutted by credible and reliable evidence which tends to show that such currency or negotiable instrument payable to the bearer is not the proceeds of a preconviction forfeiture crime. In an action tried before a jury, the jury shall be so instructed. Any sworn testimony of a defendant offered to rebut the presumption and any other evidence which is obtained as a result of such testimony, shall be inadmissible in any subsequent proceeding relating to the forfeiture action, or in any other civil or criminal action, except in a prosecution for a violation of article two hundred ten of the penal law. In an action tried before a jury, at the commencement of the trial, or at such other time as the court reasonably directs, the claiming authority shall provide notice to the court and to the defendant of its intent to request that the court charge such presumption.

3-a. Conviction of a person in a criminal action upon an accusatory instrument which includes one or more of the felonies specified in subdivision four-b of section thirteen hundred ten of this article, of any felony other than such felonies, shall not preclude a defendant, in any subsequent proceeding under this article where that conviction is at issue, from adducing evidence that the conduct underlying the conviction would not establish the elements of any of the felonies specified in such subdivision other than the one to which the criminal defendant pled guilty. If the defendant does adduce such evidence, the burden shall be upon the claiming authority to prove, by clear and convincing evidence, that the conduct underlying the criminal conviction would establish the elements of the felony specified in such subdivision. Nothing contained in this subdivision shall affect the validity of a settlement of any forfeiture action negotiated between the claiming authority and a criminal defendant contemporaneously with the taking of a plea of guilty in a criminal action to any felony defined in article two hundred twenty of the penal law, or to a felony conspiracy to commit the same.

4. The court in which a forfeiture action is pending may dismiss said

action in the interests of justice upon its own motion or upon an application as provided for herein.

(a) At any time during the pendency of a forfeiture action, the claiming authority who instituted the action, or a defendant may (i) apply for an order dismissing the complaint and terminating the forfeiture action in the interest of justice, or (ii) may apply for an order limiting the forfeiture to an amount equivalent in value to the value of property constituting the proceeds or substituted proceeds of a crime in the interest of justice.

(b) Such application for the relief provided in paragraph (a) hereof must be made in writing and upon notice to all parties. The court may, in its discretion, direct that notice be given to any other person having an interest in the property.

(c) An application for the relief provided for in paragraph (a) hereof must be brought exclusively in the superior court in which the forfeiture action is pending.

(d) The court may grant the relief provided in paragraph (a) hereof if it finds that such relief is warranted by the existence of some compelling factor, consideration or circumstance demonstrating that forfeiture of the property of any part thereof, would not serve the ends of justice. Among the factors, considerations and circumstances the court may consider, among others, are:

(i) the seriousness and circumstances of the crime to which the property is connected relative to the impact of forfeiture of property upon the person who committed the crime; or

(ii) the adverse impact of a forfeiture of property upon innocent persons; or

(iii) the appropriateness of a judgment of forfeiture in an action relating to pre-conviction forfeiture crime where the criminal proceeding based on the crime to which the property is allegedly connected results in an acquittal of the criminal defendant or a dismissal of the accusatory instrument on the merits; or

(iv) in the case of an action relating to an instrumentality, whether the value of the instrumentality substantially exceeds the value of the property constituting the proceeds or substituted proceeds of a crime.

(e) The court must issue a written decision stating the basis for an order issued pursuant to this subdivision.

4-a. (a) The court in which a forfeiture action relating to real property is pending may, upon its own motion or upon the motion of the claiming authority which instituted the action, the defendant, or any other person who has a lawful property interest in such property, enter an order:

(i) appointing an administrator pursuant to section seven hundred seventy-eight of the real property actions and proceedings law when the owner of a dwelling is a defendant in such action, and when persons who are not defendants in such action lawfully occupy one or more units within such dwelling, in order to maintain and preserve the property on behalf of such persons or any other person or entity who has a lawful property interest in such property, or in order to remedy any other condition which is dangerous to life, health or safety; or

(ii) otherwise limiting, modifying or dismissing the forfeiture action in order to preserve or protect the lawful property interest of any non-criminal defendant or any other person who is not a criminal defendant, or the lawful property interest of a defendant which is not subject to forfeiture; or

(iii) where such action involves interest in a residential leasehold or a statutory tenancy, directing that upon entry of a judgment of forfeiture, the lease or statutory tenancy will be modified as a matter of law to terminate only the interest of the defendant or defendants, and to continue the occupancy or tenancy of any other person or persons who lawfully reside in such demised premises, with such rights as such parties would otherwise have had if the defendant's interest had not been forfeited pursuant to this article.

(b) For purposes of this subdivision the term "owner" has the same meaning as prescribed for that term in section seven hundred eighty-one of the real property actions and proceedings law and the term "dwelling" shall mean any building or structure or portion thereof which is principally occupied in whole or part as the home, residence or sleeping place of one or more human beings.

5. An action for forfeiture shall be commenced by service pursuant to this chapter of a summons with notice or summons and verified complaint. No person shall forfeit any right, title, or interest in any property

who is not a defendant in the action. The claiming authority shall also file a copy of such papers with the state division of criminal justice services; provided, however, failure to file such papers shall not be grounds for any relief by a defendant in this section.

6. On the motion of any party to the forfeiture action, and for good cause shown, a court may seal any papers, including those pertaining to any provisional remedy, which relate to the forfeiture action until such time as the property which is the subject of the forfeiture action has been levied upon. A motion to seal such papers may be made ex parte and in camera.

7. Remission. In addition to any other relief provided under this chapter, at any time within one year after the entry of a judgment of forfeiture, any person, claiming an interest in the property subject to forfeiture who did not receive actual notice of the forfeiture action may petition the judge before whom the forfeiture action was held for a remission or mitigation of the forfeiture and restoration of the property or the proceeds of any sale resulting from the forfeiture, or such part thereof, as may be claimed by him. The court may restore said property upon such terms and conditions as it deems reasonable and just if (i) the petitioner establishes that he or she was without actual knowledge of the forfeiture action or any related proceeding for a provisional remedy and did not know or should not have known that the forfeited property was connected to a crime or fraudulently conveyed and (ii) the court determines that restoration of the property would serve the ends of justice.

8. The total amount that may be recovered by the claiming authority against all criminal defendants in a forfeiture action or actions involving the same crime shall not exceed the value of the proceeds of the crime or substituted proceeds of the crime, whichever amount is greater, and, in addition, the value of any forfeited instrumentality used in the crime. Any such recovery against criminal defendants for the value of the proceeds of the crime or substituted proceeds of the crime shall be reduced by an amount which equals the value of the same proceeds of the same crime or the same substituted proceeds of the same

crime recovered against all non-criminal defendants. Any such recovery for the value of an instrumentality of a crime shall be reduced by an amount which equals the value of the same instrumentality recovered against any non-criminal defendant.

The total amount that may be recovered against all non-criminal defendants in a forfeiture action or actions involving the same crime shall not exceed the value of the proceeds of the crime or the substituted proceeds of the crime, whichever amount is greater, and, in addition, the value of any forfeited instrumentality used in the crime. Any such recovery against non-criminal defendants for the value of the proceeds of the crime or substituted proceeds of the crime shall be reduced by an amount which equals the value of the proceeds of the crime or substituted proceeds of the crime recovered against all criminal defendants. A judgment against a non-criminal defendant pursuant to clause (A) of subparagraph (iv) of paragraph (b) of subdivision three of this section shall be limited to the amount of the proceeds of the crime. Any recovery for the value of an instrumentality of the crime shall be reduced by an amount equal to the value of the same instrumentality recovered against any criminal defendant.

9. Any defendant in a forfeiture action who knowingly and intentionally conceals, destroys, dissipates, alters, removes from the jurisdiction, or otherwise disposes of, property specified in a provisional remedy ordered by the court or in a judgment of forfeiture in knowing contempt of said order or judgment shall be subject to criminal liability and sanctions under sections 80.05 and 215.80 of the penal law.

10. The proper venue for trial of an action for forfeiture is:

(a) In the case of an action for post-conviction forfeiture commenced after conviction, the county where the conviction occurred.

(b) In all other cases, the county where a criminal prosecution could be commenced under article twenty of the criminal procedure law, or, in the case of an action commenced by the office of prosecution, special narcotics courts of the city of New York, under section one hundred seventy-seven-b of the judiciary law.

11. (a) Any stipulation or settlement agreement between the parties to a forfeiture action shall be filed with the clerk of the court in which the forfeiture action is pending. No stipulation or settlement agreement shall be accepted for filing unless it is accompanied by an affidavit from the claiming authority that written notice of the stipulation or settlement agreement, including the terms of such, has been given to the office of victim services, the state division of criminal justice services.

(b) No judgment or order of forfeiture shall be accepted for filing unless it is accompanied by an affidavit from the claiming authority that written notice of judgment or order, including the terms of such, has been given to the office of victim services, the state division of criminal justice services.

(c) Any claiming authority or claiming agent which receives any property pursuant to chapter thirteen of the food and drug laws (21 U.S.C. §801 et seq.) of the United States and/or chapter four of the customs duties laws (19 U.S.C. §1301 et seq.) of the United States and/or chapter 96 of the crimes and criminal procedure laws (18 U.S.C. §1961 et seq.) of the United States shall provide an affidavit to the commissioner of the division of criminal justice services stating the estimated present value of the property received.

(d) Any stipulation, settlement agreement, judgement, order or affidavit required to be given to the state division of criminal justice services pursuant to this subdivision shall include the defendant's name and such other demographic data as required by the state division of criminal justice services.

12. Property acquired in good faith by an attorney as payment for the reasonable and bona fide fees of legal services or reimbursement of reasonable and bona fide expenses related to the representation of a defendant in connection with a civil or criminal forfeiture proceeding or a related criminal matter, shall be exempt from a judgment of forfeiture. For purposes of this subdivision and subdivision four of section one thousand three hundred twelve of this article, "bona fide" means that the attorney who acquired such property had no reasonable basis to believe that the fee transaction was a fraudulent or sham

transaction designed to shield property from forfeiture, hide its existence from governmental investigative agencies, or was conducted for any purpose other than for legitimate legal representation.