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7-9-2009

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY vs. D.O.S. Case #  
H2046, \$180.00 in U.S. Currency, Seized From:  
John L. Robinson, Seizure Date: 3/28/08,  
Claimant: Kristie Robinson, Seizing Agency: 24th  
JDDTF

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**BEFORE THE COMMISSIONER  
OF THE  
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY**

<b>IN THE MATTER OF:</b>	]	
	]	
<b>DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY</b>	]	
	]	
<b>v.</b>	]	<b>DOCKET # 19.01-103642J</b>
	]	<b>D.O.S. Case # H2046</b>
<b>\$180.00 in U.S. Currency</b>	]	
<b>Seized From: John L. Robinson</b>	]	
<b>Seizure Date: 3/28/08</b>	]	
<b>Claimant: Kristie Robinson</b>	]	
<b>Seizing Agency: 24<sup>th</sup> JDDTF</b>	]	

**INITIAL ORDER OF DEFAULT & DISMISSAL**

This matter was heard on July 9, 2009, before J. Randall LaFevor, Administrative Judge assigned by the Secretary of State, Administrative Procedures Division, sitting for the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Safety in Humboldt, Tennessee. Mr. Joe Bartlett, Staff Attorney for the Tennessee Department of Safety, represented the State. The Claimant was not present, either in person or through legal counsel.

This hearing was convened to consider the proposed forfeiture of the subject currency based on allegations that its possession and/or receipt by the Claimant was in violation of the Tennessee Drug Control Act. Upon the Claimant's failure to appear at the hearing, counsel for the State made an oral motion for an order finding the Claimant to be in default, pursuant to TCA § 4-5-309. Upon full consideration of the evidence received at the hearing and the entire record in this case, the State's motion was granted. The Claimant was found to be in default, and the claim filed in this matter was stricken, as supported by the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

## **FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Claimant's vehicle was seized pursuant to law, resulting in the issuance of a Property Forfeiture Warrant. The Claimant filed a claim seeking the return of the vehicle, and requesting that a hearing be scheduled to consider that claim.
2. On September 22, 2008, the parties negotiated an agreement to forfeit \$80.00, and to return \$100.00 to the Claimant. The Claimant failed to claim his money as provided by that agreement. In the event of such a failure, the law provides for forfeiture of the currency to the seizing agency.
3. A show-cause hearing was scheduled for the Claimant to demonstrate why the money should not be forfeited after he failed to claim it. The State sent notice of the hearing time and location to the Claimant's attorney by certified mail.
4. The Postal Service delivered the State's Notice to the Claimant's attorney at his address of record.<sup>1</sup>
5. The Claimant did not appear at the hearing, and was not otherwise represented. Based on the Claimant's failure to appear, the State made an oral motion for the entry of an Order of Default.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW and ANALYSIS**

1. Tennessee Code Annotated § 4-5-309(a) provides that "if a party fails to attend or participate in a pre-hearing conference, hearing or other stage of a contested case, the administrative judge . . . may hold the party in default . . ." An order holding an absent party in default is authorized by Rule 1340-2-2-.17(1)(a), TENN. COMP. R. & REGS., *Rules of Procedure for Asset Forfeiture Hearings*.
2. Department of Safety Regulations governing asset forfeiture hearings also provide:

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<sup>1</sup> See, *Hearing Exhibit # 1*, Notification of Postal Service's delivery of the Notice of Hearing.

(e) Upon default by a party, an administrative judge may enter either an initial default order or an order for an uncontested proceeding . . .

Rule 1340-2-2-.17(1), TENN. COMP. R. & REGS., *Rules of Procedure for Asset Forfeiture Hearings*.

And, that

Upon a default by a claimant, a **claimant's claim shall be stricken by initial default order**, or, if the agency requests, the agency may proceed uncontested.

See, Rule 1340-2-2-.17(2)(b), TENN. COMP. R. & REGS., *Rules of Procedure for Asset Forfeiture Hearings*. (Bold emphasis added.)

3. In accordance with the law, as set forth above, it is determined that the State's motion is well-taken. The State made reasonable efforts to notify the Claimant of the hearing, as shown by the Postal Service notation, and he failed to appear at the hearing to pursue his claim. Pursuant to the cited authority, the Claimant is hereby found to be in default for failing to appear at the hearing scheduled to consider his claim.

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Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED that the Claimant's claim is stricken from the record, and dismissed. The Claimant's interest in the \$100.00 in U.S. Currency is Ordered forfeited to the Seizing Agency, the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Drug Task Force, for disposition as provided by law.

Entered and effective this 20th day of July, 2009.

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J. Randall LaFevor, Administrative Judge

Filed in the Administrative Procedures Division, Office of the Secretary of State,  
this 20th day of July, 2009.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas G. Stovall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'T' and a long, sweeping underline.

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Thomas G. Stovall, Director  
Administrative Procedures Division