

TESTIMONY OF PATRICIA HOLSINGER

Ironton, OH

In Opposition to Legalizing Discharge of Consumer Grade Fireworks

House Bill 226

House Accountability and Oversight Committee

June 7, 2017

Chairman Blessing and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak in opposition of House Bill 226 which would make dramatic changes to Ohio's current fireworks law, including legalizing the discharge of 1.4G consumer grade fireworks in Ohio which include the more powerful fireworks, missiles and bottle rockets. The summer of 2014 and all the summers following it have been devastating to me and my family because of these products. I totally disagree with this bill and see nothing good that can come of it besides increased sales in a small fireworks store.

My parents were both killed on July 5, 2014 in Lawrence County Ohio due to a consumer firework that landed on their roof and caused a house fire. Leo (78) and Betty (76) Sayre had lived in their house 48 happy years. My father was one of 13 children and he took great pride in owning his home. His lawn and home were always kept immaculate. My parents worked very hard to have these things and to give me the things they didn't have in their life.

My father was alerted by a neighbor that there was a brushfire in their backyard on July 4th around 9 p.m. from a firework that landed in a wheel barrow full of brush. My 78 year old father and a neighbor put out the fire and my father returned to bed. Around 1 a.m. my father was awakened by a neighbor or so I assume (maybe he smelled smoke or was awoken by the heat). The neighbor and my father fought the bigger fire that had now started on the roof of their house with a garden hose and other neighbors had called the volunteer firefighters. My father went back into the house to rescue my Mother (bedridden for 4 years due to rare form of Parkinson's) and never made it to her room. Both my parents died of smoke inhalation and I didn't get the chance to say goodbye. I cannot imagine the panic my Father must have felt during this time. I also can't imagine how my Mother felt when her room filled with smoke, I'm sure she was panicked as well.

I got the call around 1:30 a.m. warning me of the fire and on my way there I called the neighbor back to see if my parents were ok (My husband and I left in such a panic I didn't ask) only to find out they didn't make it. We arrived to the sight of a street filled with fire trucks and my childhood home was full of flames. My parents were laying in the street on gurneys covered with a sheet. They would not allow me past the fire tape, so I had to watch their home burn to just a brick frame of a house.

The county coroner would not allow me to take one last look at them. I'm sure that was in my best interest but it is very unsettling to me. I still think about them lying in the street on that dark morning. It's just a picture I can't get out of my head. I stayed at the scene all morning talking to fire marshals and volunteer firemen until around 1p.m. that day and left only because some family members were making me leave. The volunteer fire chief and his firemen were angels to me and my family. They went back into the smoldering house to retrieve some of my parents' things and some of my childhood memories.

I am an only child and my parents built that house in 1966 (my first year of school). I lost two of the most important people in my life that morning. My two grown children and one grandson lost their loving grandparents. My sweet husband lost his in-laws that had served as his parents for 33 years (his parents died in the early 1980's).

We are lost during the holiday seasons ... not knowing what to do for Thanksgiving and Christmas and every birthday that we would have normally celebrated together. This wound is still fresh for me and with time I'm sure we will all heal. I understand that my parents were aging and with time I would have lost them to something. It was with God's grace that they left this earth together. My Father died a HERO in my eyes .After 4 months, the paperwork and talks with investigators have slowed down and life is getting more real for me. I didn't have time to grieve because there were so many things that needed my attention.

I would not want anyone to go through this devastating tragedy and hope that you realize that your vote NO can prevent this from happening in OHIO to a lot of folks. Fireworks are EXPLOSIVES and should be handled by someone trained in this field. Please leave this matter to the professionals that put on beautiful shows to celebrate this country's freedom.

Please put yourself in my shoes when you use your vote. My July 4th will never be the same and I will forever look at fireworks in a different way.

Thank you,
Patricia Holsinger
213 Westview Street
South Point, OH 45680
740-547-4226