

House Bill 226
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Senate Committee on Government Oversight and Reform

Chairman Coley, Vice Chairman Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and members of the Ohio Senate Committee on Government Oversight and Reform, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 226.

The summer of 2014 and all of the summers following that have been a devastating reminder to me and my family about the dangers of consumer grade fireworks. On July 4, 2014 in Proctorville, Ohio, my parents' home burned due to a neighbor setting off backyard fireworks causing both of their deaths. My parents were asleep that night awakened by neighbors that their roof was on fire. My father tried to put out the flames but realized he could not and he went back into the house to get my bedfast mother.

My parents Leo (78) and Betty (76) were killed the morning of July 5, 2014 due to this horrible house fire. Both of my parents died from smoke inhalation. I received a call about 1:30 am July 5, 2014 alerting me of the house fire. I arrived to see the street lined with firetrucks and ambulances. My poor parents were laying in their front yard covered with a sheet on gurneys. I had been to visit them earlier that day but never realized it would be the last time I saw them.

The volunteer firemen were angels to me that horrible night and stayed at the scene with me up until mid-day on July 5th. I had to stay and watch my childhood home smolder to the ground. My sweet parents were not allowed to be taken away until around 4 am that morning because of the coroners, investigators and law enforcement. So picture in your mind how hard that was to watch them lay in the yard and not be able to hug or touch them. I know this was for my safety as well but I just want you to imagine yourself in my shoes that night.

Casings of fireworks littered their yard and all of their belongings as well. They had built this home in 1966 and were truly proud Americans. My father took great pride in his antique cars and his home as well as my mother and her pride in keeping the house just perfect. My father came from a family of 13 and worked very hard to buy his home. That night July 4, 2014, all of that history and pride went up in smoke.

I realize that the fireworks industry is a lot bigger than I am and I cannot keep people from illegally discharging consumer fireworks. I am an American and enjoy celebrating our Nations freedom at a professional display. I have written letters to several local papers as far away as Cincinnati to express safety during July 4th and to please contact your local representative to express your views on the stopping of HB 226 to increase the power of local fireworks.

I have lost two of the most important people in my life because of the terrible accident and I would never want anyone to experience what I went through. I have decided this year to start a scholarship fund in the school district that my parents lived for a volunteer fireman to further their education. This is one thing I feel I can do to honor their memory.

I also feel it is an honor to speak against this HB 226 due to my circumstances, but you must understand that this is hard for me to relive this tragic night over and over again. Please use your power to vote NO on this bill and think of the lives that you might save in doing so. Remember my parents were asleep that night not bothering anyone and their freedom was taken away..... what does it take to stop the increase of what has already caused such a tragedy! I realize they are just two people and statistically that's a low number but they were two very special people to me.

I had a friend call me last July 4th when her neighbor was setting off a display and they were all landing in her yard. She was quite upset and said "Next year I'm going to invite them over to my house and let their fireworks off and aim them toward their home". We all live in neighborhoods and I just hope and pray that a firework doesn't land on your roof while you are sleeping. Please leave the fireworks to the professionals!

This could happen to any of us... please vote NO on HB 226 to keep the statistics low and not destroy another family.

Thank you,

Patricia Holsinger