

Leawood Gardens Neighborhood Association and the MAC

.....In opposition to SB 113.

- ❖ Why are we “legalizing” 120-150 decibel EXPLOSIONS from fireworks that do way more to DISRUPT our holidays than they do to enhance them and help to make them more enjoyable for everyone??
- ❖ As densely populated as our neighborhoods are, when even one resident sets off fireworks in his or her backyard, the impact---auditory, psychological, and as just a plain annoyance---affects literally dozens of nearby residents (including their safety) who have no control or recourse over this practice.
- ❖ Why are we legalizing fireworks for the few, when the negative impact and injurious, destructive consequences affect so many others nearby who are neutral on the subject; do not partake in this practice; and/or are adamantly opposed to this form of “entertainment”?
- ❖ Possibly, even in this age of gunshots and noise pollution throughout our Cities, one could still make a case for fireworks around the 4th of July as a long-standing American “tradition” (and many say that has even become ridiculous at this point); but what pray tell do fireworks have to do with Labor Day or Memorial Day or Cinco de Mayo or Juneteenth???

- ❖ Maybe we should legalize fireworks for the Easter holiday and for Thanksgiving and for Valentine’s Day as well??
- ❖ Why after all these years where it has been “illegal” in the state of Ohio and fireworks have been ubiquitous already—especially since the “pandemic summer” of 2020, why are we now making it “legal” on several holidays that traditionally have had little to nothing to do with fireworks so that we as a state are now encouraging this practice far & wide, virtually all year long?
- ❖ If the point is made (as Senator Thomas did) that states all around us have made fireworks “legal” and that it doesn’t make sense for the state of Ohio to lose all that revenue....
- ❖ For one, it’s questionable that Ohio currently loses that much (if any) revenue in the first place; retailers of fireworks abound throughout Ohio. For years and years, Ohioans have known quite well that they do not have to cross state lines to purchase fireworks. (The “waiver” they sign is a well understood “joke”...wink, wink).
- ❖ As far as fireworks “not being a significant problem” throughout the rest of the nation (as Senator Thomas also alluded to), then what does it mean when 10,000 people in the United States per year (on average) visit the emergency room from injuries due directly to

fireworks? And most of these injuries are from legal fireworks. Is that not a significant problem in itself? Do we just accept that that many people will be injured each year due to fireworks?? Instead of Ohio being a “follower” of these asinine trends, why doesn’t the State of Ohio be a leader in safety and common sense?

- ❖ Why, when there is virtually no one (except for representatives of the pyrotechnics industry) generally present to testify in favor of fireworks----and there are always a significant number of people from all walks of life and professions testifying against fireworks (or at least the unrestrained legality of fireworks), why does the testimony of the latter groups seem to be totally dismissed and ignored?

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Verbal testimony given by Scott Hurlburt in the North Hearing room at the Ohio Statehouse on June 1, 2021, regarding SB #113

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First of all, thank you for your consideration of this issue and for this opportunity to speak.

As a brief introduction of myself, I am resident of Columbus for nearly four (4) decades. I know Columbus and my neighborhood well. And for the last 20 years, I have been heavily involved as a community activist working with Columbus Police, City Council, Code Enforcement and many other City departments to do everything possible for the betterment of our neighborhoods—and our quality of life.

I am an active member of the **Leawood Gardens Neighborhood Association**, which is also jointly a part of the MAC, the **Mideast Area Commission**, along with 14 other neighborhood Associations.

But as much as I love Columbus, and I do very much, I am now in the process of looking for a new home and moving out of town. And why would I be doing that?

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One word: Fireworks.

As you may or may not fully realize, fireworks became a “thing” during the pandemic summer of 2020. Prior to that, fireworks were primarily connected to the 4th of July holiday and the few days before and after. For several years, I dealt with the excessive noise and disruption by going on a week-long retreat.

But now that it’s open season for fireworks, there is nowhere to go, no place to escape the onslaught. Even at cabins down in the hills, there are fireworks. Believe me, I’ve researched it.

In my case, it’s not only a peace of mind issue, it’s a health issue. I’ve dealt with tinnitus (ringing in the ears) for 21 years---and I can tell you that fireworks and ear health are simply not compatible.

Last summer (my favorite season of the year) was ruined for me---and for many, many others---all because of the new-found “popularity” of fireworks. One of my most favorite things to do is go out in the cooler temperatures of a summer evening and tinker in the garden. I can no longer do that.

Because of fireworks—some of which register at 150 decibels. I now have to stay inside, feeling trapped in my own home. I can’t even safely walk my dog out in the neighborhood in the evenings anymore.

To illustrate the experience of some of these fireworks---it would be like an M-80 or cherry bomb going off in the middle of your desk sometime this afternoon, but you would have no advance warning of when that would be. Think about it.

On behalf of myself and many others, I ask for you to really listen to all the people and groups who are opposed to this legislation. I ask for common sense in trying to maintain the peace, safety, and sanctity of our neighborhoods. ...And your “amendment” (legalizing fireworks only during certain holidays)----forget about it; fireworks are virtually unenforceable now, and it will remain that way after this bill passes as far as realistic enforcement in between those particular holiday dates.

The fleeting enjoyment of a handful of the few is not worth the short term and long-term disruption of peace for the rest of us.

p.s. I also urge Members of the Safety Committee to research “Silent” fireworks. It’s a great alternative (already mandated in some European municipalities) that say fireworks by law are of minimal decibel level, but still retain the visual effects that everyone can enjoy.

Bullet points of verbal testimony of Scott Hurlburt opposing the passage of SB #113:

- ✚ Long-time resident (nearly 40 years) of **Leawood Gardens** neighborhood; highly active member of **Leawood Gardens Neighborhood Association** and the **MAC** (Mid-east Area Commission) for nearly 20 years.
- ✚ Because of the newfound “popularity” of fireworks and their ever-expanding proliferation, it is imperative that I move from my neighborhood of nearly four decades; but where does one move in this current climate (and in the wake of these current legislative moves) to distance oneself from the intrusion, disruption, and danger of fireworks?

- ✚ The “pandemic summer” of 2020 completely and radically changed the mindset of many people in our community regarding the use and frequency of fireworks. While some welcome this shift with glee and fervor, the majority of people are not in favor of this apparent new trend.
- ✚ On a personal note, this new trend is especially concerning for me as I have significant health concerns involving my ears and tinnitus (ringing in the ears); fireworks and ear health are simply not compatible. And with this most recent legislation deeming fireworks “legal”, it immediately makes it decidedly more difficult to protect my health.
- ✚ Instead of enjoying the nice summer evenings outside, I now have to be trapped in my own home, even on nights where fireworks don’t go off---because when they do, there is no warning whatsoever prior to the jarring explosion.
- ✚ Some of these fireworks register at 150 decibels, especially at close range (which are densely populated neighborhoods facilitate), and that sound level is more than enough to do permanent damage to your ears.
- ✚ That’s to say nothing of the 10,000 people who visit emergency rooms in the U.S. each year (on average) from other bodily injuries due to fireworks (and that’s mostly from “legal” fireworks).
- ✚ What life has become in our neighborhoods is one of living “on edge”, anticipating when the next explosions will start. It’s much like if you were working in your office and an M-80 or “cherry bomb” firecracker were going to go off sometime during the day right in the middle of your desk---but you had no idea of when that would be.

- ✚ With the passage of this bill (designating several holidays where it's legal to set off fireworks---which in itself is a huge mistake and a big step in the wrong direction), enforcement in between these designated holidays will be laughable at best, because “enforcement” of the “illegal” setting off of fireworks now is virtually unenforceable, even when the police are able to respond. With the passage of this bill, law enforcement will completely step away from any semblance of “enforcement”, holiday or no. (Already a very low, low, low priority call for CPD).
- ✚ The fleeting enjoyment of a handful of the few is not worth the short term and long-term disruption of peace & safety for the rest of us.

- ✚ We urge a continued, genuine conversation on this issue with all parties involved, so that we might consider keeping fireworks restricted to the traditional 4th of July holiday and New Years eve.
- ✚ And a serious discussion on possible registration and training for those private individuals who choose to set off fireworks, as a way to minimize the thousands of serious injuries (as well as some deaths) that occur each year.
- ✚ We also urge the consideration of “Silent” fireworks as a common sense alternative (already mandated in some European communities), which keep the audible nature to a minimum while still providing desirable visual effects.
