



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Welch

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - Prohibition Against Fireworks in Baltimore City

FOR the purpose of requesting the Fire Chief to undertake a public information campaign to warn the public about the dangers of fireworks and the high incidence of serious injury resulting from the use of fireworks by amateurs; to educate Baltimore City residents about the prohibition against the sale and use of fireworks within City limits; and to encourage those who wish to enjoy fireworks displays on the Fourth of July holiday to do so at an event that is legally permitted by Fire Officials to hold fireworks shows.

Recitals

In Fireworks, a publication of the National Fire Protection Association, it is reported that in 2006, 9,200 fireworks-related injuries were treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms, a trend that has been mostly up since 1996, with spikes in 2000-2001, primarily due to celebrations around the advent of a new millennium, and in 2005. From 2002-2005, an estimated 30,100 reported fires a year were started by fireworks, including 2,400 structure and vehicle fires.

From 2001- 2005, 1 person a year was killed in fires started by fireworks, while 6 persons a year were killed directly by fireworks. In 2006, 1/3 of victims of fireworks injuries were under age 15; the highest rates of injuries per million population were for children aged 10 to 14; males accounted for 75% of fireworks injuries; and 9 out of 10 emergency room fireworks injuries involved fireworks that federal regulations permit consumers to use. Nationwide, fireworks are shown to be the consumer product with the highest risk of causing death due to fire.

The Maryland State Fire Marshall reports that in recent years the number of fireworks-related injuries in Maryland has ranged from 10 to 30 each year. About 60% of these injuries occur during the 2 weeks before and after the 4th of July, and most are the result of premature ignition. Officials believe the actual numbers of injuries are much higher than the records show because many incidents go unreported, the injured go to their local doctor for treatment, or they falsify the information about how the injury occurred.

As of 2001, Maryland law allows ground-based sparkling devices, in addition to the novelty item previously allowed, and permits local jurisdictions to set stricter guidelines than State law dictates. Some local jurisdictions, such as Harford and Howard counties and Ocean City, have banned ground based sparklers, while other

jurisdictions, including Prince Georges and Montgomery County as well as Baltimore City, prohibit the "possession, manufacture, storage, sale, handling, and use of fireworks."

Baltimore City Fire Department officials warn the public to "leave fireworks to the professionals" because "it is simply too dangerous to use fireworks yourself or to be around friends who use them; instead, enjoy the thrill of pyrotechnics at a public display presented by train professionals, where compliance with state-of-the-art fire codes offers a safer way to enjoy the holidays."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Fire Chief is requested to undertake a public information campaign to warn the public about the dangers of fireworks and the high incidence of serious injury resulting from the use of fireworks by amateurs; to educate Baltimore City residents about the prohibition against the sale and use of fireworks within City limits; and to encourage those who wish to enjoy fireworks displays on the Fourth of July holiday to do so at an event that is legally permitted by Fire Officials to hold fireworks shows.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Fire Chief, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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