

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Mary Small from Bath, Maine and I thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of LD 1307 An Act To Restrict the Sale, Purchase and Use of Fireworks in the State and LD 1348 An Act to Limit the Decibel Level of Fireworks Near Working Farms. If LD 1348 could be amended to include all farms with livestock and not just "working farms" I could support that bill although I prefer LD 1307 which outright bans Fireworks in Maine.

I recognize there will be ramifications if dealers are forced to shut down. However, that did not stop the Legislature from repealing the Maine's Car Test Law after considerable investment had been spent setting up the privately owned testing sites. A bad law is a bad law.

My objections to legalized Fireworks in Maine are many but foremost is the risk they pose to not just livestock but family animals as well. Unlike a community's fireworks displays which are advertised and confined to a set hour, most private fireworks are set off whenever they feel like it. If you have pets that are fearful of the sound, there is no way to prepare for it because you never know when it's coming. Last 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I reposted almost a dozen lost or missing dog notices on Facebook when they had been scared by fireworks and attempted to flee. These were just people with whom I had a Facebook connection. I imagine it is a much greater problem than the dozen I saw.

In addition to the carnage it causes for pets, it is far worse for horses. My family owns seven horses boarded at two different facilities. One daughter's farm in Durham has four horses there and she never knows when the neighbors will light off fireworks. She has tried to ask for warning but with little success. For the last ten years, she has spent every 4<sup>th</sup> of July night and sometimes weekend in her barn with the doors and windows shut and the music on high to try and keep her horses from injuring themselves in their stalls. That does not account for the "practice" fireworks they set off during the day while the horses are in the pasture or when she is attempting to ride. Other holidays can be equally disturbing.

Her little farm is not a "Working Farm" but those horses mean everything to her and their replacement value would be above \$60,000.

Fireworks are perhaps one of the most selfish acts in which Mainers participate. "I don't care if I wake you up, cause your PTSD to erupt, make your pets run away or in the sad case in Yarmouth last summer, kill your horse. As long as I am enjoying myself, you don't matter." Maybe that is what Maine has become but I harken back to a saner time when then Governor Reed vetoed a fireworks legalization bill on May 28, 1965 saying, "*I have sincere respect for those interested in this bill, however, a study of the experience records from the use of fireworks clearly convinces me that if this measure became law a new menace to persons and property would be created. Available information indicates that as many as 5,000 people each year suffer injuries ranging from minor cuts and bruises to maiming as a result of fireworks accidents.*"

These were 1965 statistics governor Reed quoted. According to U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission 2018 Fireworks Annual Report, Fireworks started an estimated 19,500 fires in 2018, including 1,900 structure fires, 500 vehicle fires, and 17,100 outside and other fires. These fires caused five deaths, 46 civilian injuries, and \$105 million in direct property damage.

In 2018, U.S. hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 9,100 people for fireworks related injuries; half of those injuries were to the extremities and 34% were to the eye or other parts of the head. Children younger than 15 years of age accounted for more than one-third (36%) of the estimated 2018 injuries.

This was an ill-conceived law passed in the 125<sup>th</sup> and it is certainly time for the Legislature to listen to the safety experts and repeal this burdensome law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

