

OPPOSE MODIFYING THE COUNTY'S SAFE AND SANE FIREWORKS LAW ON 4/11

On Tuesday, April 11, 2017, at 9 a.m. at 845 N. Motel Blvd. the County Commission will be voting to approve an ordinance amending the current safe and sane fireworks ordinance. The proposal would allow "specialty retailers" to sell ground audible and aerial fireworks year round (currently prohibited by the County's safe and sane fireworks ordinance). Supposedly, these fireworks would only be sold to non-Dona Ana County residents.

I am writing to ask that you **email our 5 county commissioners** to request that the current countywide Safe and Sane Fireworks ordinance remain in effect as is, and that the commissioners who received big campaign contributions from the fireworks vendors recuse themselves.

In emailing the commissioners (see the attached Sun News article of 3/14/17), please also request that **Commissioner Solia and Commissioner Vasquez** recuse themselves from this vote, since each received a campaign contribution of **\$2,500 each from Bowlin Travel Centers, Inc.**, which is the specialty fireworks vendor who will benefit from an ordinance change and sell banned fireworks year round. This smacks of "pay for play" as Commissioner Garrett mentioned at the 4/14/17 meeting. Further, actual or the appearance of impropriety undermines public trust in our Commission. It's odd that the first method the Commission considered to promote economic growth was increased fireworks sales.

Further, **please attend the April 11 County Commission meeting** to speak and oppose the proposed amended ordinance and ask that two commissioners recuse themselves. At the 3/14 Commission meeting the vendors had 8 people speaking in favor of amending the fireworks ordinance; there were only 2 people opposing. We need a robust turnout for the 4/11 Commission meeting.

The reasons to oppose the amendment to the ordinance are:

1. Permitting more retailers to sell ground audible and aerial fireworks to non-County residents will not keep these fireworks from being used in Dona Ana County. The decrease in use of these fireworks from 2007 to now is due to fewer vendors being permitted to sell these fireworks due to our current county safe and sane ordinance. While there are still violations of the ordinance, the reduced availability of these fireworks has resulted in their decreased use.
2. Enforcing compliance and record checking by these specialty fireworks vendors will consume fire and law enforcement resources that are better spent elsewhere.
3. The **public is not requesting a change in the ordinance**; the change is being requested by the fireworks vendors. The increased GRT revenue is exceeded by the disturbance of the public peace, trash cleanup and fire, EMS and law enforcement costs.
4. The public already has access to consumer fireworks. The current county ordinance permits many type of less dangerous types of fireworks available for purchase by the public (sparklers, toys, cones, fountains, wheels, etc.). In addition, there are safe and enjoyable public fireworks displays on July 4th. (turn page over)

5. The ground audible and aerial fireworks compromise public safety, causing fires, injuries, and violations, all consuming public safety resources.
6. Many residents are truly disturbed and suffer damage due to the loud ground and aerial fireworks, including individuals suffering from PTSD, the elderly, the young, those living near the fireworks, people's pets, livestock, etc.,
7. Loosening the safe and sane fireworks ordinance will embolden the fireworks vendors to further modify and eventually again try to eliminate the safe and sane fireworks ordinance.

In 2005, the City of Las Cruces, and in 2007 Doña Ana County, passed an ordinance outlawing ground audible (firecrackers, cherry bombs, etc.) and aerial fireworks (mines, shells, aerial explosive fireworks, etc.) for personal use, the so-called "safe and sane" fireworks regulations. Note: eight categories of fireworks, such as sparklers, cones, fountains, etc., are not affected by safe and sane regulations and are available to the public.

Your email could be sent jointly to all commissioners advocating "do not modify our current safe and sane countywide fireworks regulations and recuse commissioners who received large campaign contributions from the vendors." The sender's street address and telephone number should be included in the email. The email of all 5 commissioners is:

bgarrett@donaanacounty.org; rgonzalez@donaanacounty.org; brawson@donaanacounty.org; isolis@donaanacounty.org; jvasquez@donaanacounty.org

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Dist 3 Commissioner: Benjamin L. Rawson (575) 525-5807 (Office) and (575) 644-4055 (Cell)
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Dist 4 Commissioner: Isabella Solia 575 525-5810 (Office) and 575 635-2479 (Cell)
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Dist 5 Commissioner: John L. Vasquez (575) 525-5809 (Office) and (575) 635-5146 (Cell)
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If you need any further information, feel free to contact me (Bill Corbett w-646-4827 and h-522-1372): I served on the county's Fireworks Committee in 2006 and 2007 and advocated for safe and sane fireworks regulations. Earlier this year, the Commission withdrew a proposal to completely eliminate the safe and sane fireworks ordinance due to input from the public. We can do it again.

Thanks very much, Bill Corbett