CONSUMER FIREWORKS SAMPLE OP-ED – Illegal Use

This sample is written for joint submission by elected officials

and their police chiefs and/or fire chiefs

Please modify as appropriate to meet your local needs

Consumer Fireworks Have Turned *(Input your municipality)* Into A War Zone

As our residents are well aware, the legalization of consumer fireworks in 2017 has resulted in fireworks activity well beyond the normal summer holiday celebrations. They have become a regular weeknight and weekend occurrence during the summer months. This use is illegal, as there is no place within the (*your municipality*) to legally use consumer fireworks. Since 2017, community leaders, law enforcement, fire personnel, and residents have faced many sleepless nights worrying where these fireworks will land, how long they will be shot off and will they start a fire or cause injury?

The *(your municipality)* and its first responders have been tasked with enforcing an unenforceable, expensive, and irresponsible law. We have met the challenge by devoting time, money and personnel to respond to complaints. However, the unpredictability of when and where consumer fireworks will be shot off, as well as the prevalence of their use, has hindered our efforts, as has the need to catch fireworks users in the act in order to cite them.

*(Please add a paragraph describing your municipality’s consumer fireworks enforcement efforts) For example, compare the number of calls versus the number of arrests, describe any public statements made to residents prior to the summer season reminding them of the law; describe any particular incidents while attempting to enforce.*

Despite our best enforcement efforts and dedicated first responders there is still an abundant use of illegal fireworks in (*your municipality*). *(Provide brief examples of illegal consumer fireworks use in your municipality)*

As local government officials, we are committed to our duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of all our residents. However, we cannot fulfill this duty when this ill-conceived law hinders our enforcement efforts and does not allow for stricter local regulation.

Enough is enough. The General Assembly passed an unenforceable and expensive law that has negatively impacted Pennsylvania’s residents and local governments, and now is the time to fix it.

(*Your municipality*) has been turned into war zone by irresponsible and illegal fireworks use. Our residents and first responders should not have to endure this. Fireworks have plagued our community and they will continue to do so until the law is either repealed or substantially amended.

We call upon the House and Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committees to hold a joint hearing on the impacts of consumer fireworks in order to vet the dangers and unenforceable nature of this law, and to work with local government to either repeal the law or find a mutually agreeable solution that allows for effective local enforcement.

The local public safety burden of this law, not to mention the avoidable tragedies of loss of life and property since enactment, prove the time to fix this law is way past due.