

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



MIKE LAMBERT
DIRECTOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT GOVERNOR
KE KE'ENA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai
715 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii'i 96813

JARED K. REDULLA
Deputy Director
Law Enforcement

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 227
RELATING TO FIREWORKS
Before the Senate Committee on
WAYS AND MEANS



Tuesday, February 18, 2025, 10:01 AM
State Capitol Conference Room 211 & Videoconference

Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) strongly supports Senate Bill 227, establishing the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division. This bill builds upon the successful foundation established by Act 67, Session Laws of Hawaii 2023, which created the Illegal Fireworks Task Force. Since its inception, the Task Force has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness, interdicting over 200,000 pounds of illegal fireworks through coordinated law enforcement operations. Establishing a permanent Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division within DLE represents a crucial next step in our ongoing efforts to combat illegal fireworks in Hawaii.

The proposed division will enhance our capability to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to stop the importation and distribution of illegal fireworks while promoting compliance with state fireworks control laws. The six permanent positions provided for in this bill are essential for maintaining consistent, year-round enforcement operations and coordinating inter-agency efforts effectively.

The sunset provision of June 30, 2028, allows for appropriate evaluation of the division's effectiveness while providing sufficient time to establish and demonstrate sustainable results. This timeline aligns with our strategic approach to addressing the persistent challenge of illegal fireworks in our communities.

Based on our experience with the Task Force operations, we anticipate this permanent division will significantly strengthen our ability to protect public safety and ensure the security of our ports, airports, and communities from the dangers of illegal fireworks.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.



Hawaiian Humane Society
People for animals. Animals for people.

LATE

Date: Feb. 17, 2025

To: Chair Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz
Vice Chair Sen. Sharon Y. Moriwaki,
and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means

Submitted By: Stephanie Kendrick, Director of Community Engagement
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Testimony in support of SB 227: Relating to Fireworks
Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025, 10:01 a.m., Room 211 & Videoconference

On behalf of the Hawaiian Humane Society, thank you for considering our support for Senate Bill 227, which establishes the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division within the Department of Law Enforcement; appropriates funds; and sunsets 6/30/2028.

DLE has played an important role in the incredible work of the Illegal Fireworks Task Force, which has seized 187,000 pounds - or more than 93 tons - of illegal fireworks found in shipping containers since it was established. We support extending this focus by creating a specialized division within the department.

Hawaiian Humane supports any attempt to restrict fireworks from residential neighborhoods. The ample evidence that tons of illegal fireworks are still making it onto the local black market despite the successful interdictions at our ports shows that the magnitude of this problem is staggering. After the tragic deaths and injuries on O'ahu this year, it should be clear to our community that lighting off explosives in our neighborhoods poses an unacceptable risk.

Hawaiian Humane has long educated our community about keeping pets safe from the terror of fireworks around New Years and July 4, but these bombs increasingly go off for months at a time without warning. That makes it impossible for pet owners to prepare and creates sustained stress on people and animals, which can do lasting damage to their emotional, mental and physical health.

Please pass SB227, support the work of the Department of Law Enforcement, and prevent future tragedies. Mahalo for your consideration.



LATE

Hawaii Representatives & Senators:

On behalf of the Libertarian Party of Hawaii, I am writing to express our strong opposition to any prohibitions and enforcement measures targeting fireworks. We believe Hawaiians have the right to pursue and engage in any activities that bring them joy and fulfillment.

Fireworks prohibitions and regulations infringe upon the freedom of our citizens to partake in this time-honored custom, diminishing the spirit of celebration and unity that fireworks bring.

Implementing strict enforcement measures to crack down on fireworks usage would only serve to burden law enforcement resources, and divert needed attention away from more pressing issues. Prohibitions and heavy enforcement will lead to unnecessary conflict between police and citizens, eroding trust and creating an atmosphere of fear and animosity. Causing harm against another person is already illegal, and crimes can already be prosecuted without these new tyrannical enforcement measures.

The Libertarian Party of Hawaii stands firm in our support of individual freedom and opposes any measures that encroach upon our citizens' rights.

In Freedom,

Abbra Green
Executive Secretary, Libertarian Party of Hawaii
lphisecretary@gmail.com

SB-227

Submitted on: 2/14/2025 9:03:32 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/18/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this important bill. Mahalo.

SB-227

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 8:15:45 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/18/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Urasaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In Support.

Mahalo

SB-227

Submitted on: 2/15/2025 2:42:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/18/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Perrine	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

A fireworks enforcement division should be helpful in alleviating the scourge of illegal fireworks in Hawaii. However laws cannot stop an activity which is in high demand, as proven by the "war on drugs." To address the demand side of the equation, I recommend adding a provision to this bill that requires the state to fund twice-yearly (New Year's Eve and Fourth of July) drone "fireworks" displays in each county. When residents experience for themselves this superior method of celebrating, the demand for dangerous explosive fireworks will begin to recede. Please pass SB227, preferably with the amendment suggested above.

SB-227

Submitted on: 2/16/2025 7:53:07 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/18/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
K Southcott	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This is needed it's utterly embarrassing that we live on an island and millions of dollars in illegal fireworks walk in through the front door. If you are missing this what about drugs, guns, animals and pests?

SB-227

Submitted on: 2/16/2025 7:12:49 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/18/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ruth Love	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Do you hear yourself? " establish a ...task force to come with... a plan".

Just have the existing officers enforce the laws already on the books. Crazy idea, have officers swap islands so that they don't have to worry about arresting their cousins.

Thank you

Mrs Ruth Love

SB-227

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 7:06:39 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/18/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Beverly Heiser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

I STRONGLY SUPPORT SB227 that establishes the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division within the Department of Law Enforcement and appropriates funds.

Establishing an Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Division will provide the **full-time dedication** needed to slow the flow of Illegal Fireworks entering the state. This type of enforcement is needed, due to illegal fireworks being so out of control and the extensive involvement of the black market.

Act 67 established the Illegal Fireworks Task Force (IFTF) under the Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) on June 7, 2023. The IFTF has made the most progress thus far, to interrupt the supply chain and distribution that led to some areas on Oahu noting a slight reduction of illegal fireworks in 2023. This effort has accomplished more than any other initiative to reduce illegal fireworks use, and has resulted in ongoing criminal investigations, two felony indictments, and covert operations that resulted in twenty criminal citations.

The amount seized at the docks from December 2023 to January 2024 indicates a strong need for this type of effort to continue. The report to the 2025 legislature submitted by Jordan Lowe stated that “any earnest effort to counter illegal fireworks can only be done with a dedicated criminal investigative unit with sustained staffing and funding”. The current IFTF uses State Narcotics investigators who participate only part-time due to having other duties. The report further stated fireworks are smuggled into Hawaii year-round via “shipping, air transport, and mail channels”. It confirms that there is a “flourishing fireworks black market” with “well-established networks and organizations” and a “well-established underground of people” who use illegal fireworks regularly.

The Aliamanu tragedy was sad, and it is hopeful that the lives lost and those suffering from life-changing critical injuries were not in vain but will provide the wake-up call to take the use of illegal fireworks seriously. This all starts with legislators creating laws to invoke stiffer penalties and higher fines, and it allows enforcement to the fullest extent of the law to instill a fear of getting caught and induce deterrence. This may require more appropriations committed this year to be effective, but how do you put a price on lives lost, life-changing deformities, and psychological issues that may require medical attention for the rest of one's life? Yes, enough is enough.

Please provide your full support for SB227 and thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

SB-227

Submitted on: 2/17/2025 10:00:28 PM

Testimony for WAM on 2/18/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicholas Zehr	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I strongly oppose this bill, which expands government enforcement on fireworks at the expense of personal freedom, cultural traditions, and fiscal responsibility.

Fireworks have long been an integral part of Hawai‘i’s celebrations. Rather than criminalizing responsible, peaceful festivities, we should empower communities to safely enjoy these traditions.

This bill **diverts valuable taxpayer dollars**—funds that could address pressing issues like housing, rising living costs, and infrastructure—toward an expanded enforcement division. Evidence shows that broad law enforcement initiatives often yield diminishing returns compared to targeted, community-based solutions.

Targeted, Effective Alternatives:

- **Designated Fireworks Zones:** Safe, community-sanctioned areas for celebrations.
- **Education Campaigns:** Programs promoting fire safety and responsible use.
- **Focused Enforcement:** Direct resources toward combating large-scale criminal operations rather than penalizing individual celebrants.

Expanding enforcement powers tends to become permanent, **risking overcriminalization and disproportionately impacting ordinary, working-class citizens.**

In summary, this bill unnecessarily intrudes on personal liberties, misallocates resources, and is unlikely to effectively address the underlying issues. I urge you to reject this measure in favor of solutions that respect our traditions and ensure responsible use of public funds.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Nicholas Zehr

LATE

SB-227

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 10:06:06 AM

Testimony for WAM on 2/18/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Willis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose