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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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## Committee Passes Explosive Penalties For Fireworks Code Violations

*Public Safety Committee Passes Ordinance Doubling Fines, Focuses On Minors*

The Common Council's Public Safety Committee voted today to substantially increase the penalties and fines for fireworks ordinance violations.

"All fireworks within the City of Milwaukee that have not been permitted by the city are illegal, and anyone caught with them or seen setting them off will now face much more extensive fines and sanctions," said Ald. Terry L. Witkowski, co-chair of the Common Council's Fireworks Task Force.

Ald. Witkowski reiterated the point that fireworks "permits" issued by sellers in other counties and other communities are not valid in the City of Milwaukee. "Those permits are meaningless and will not protect anyone who possesses or sets off fireworks in Milwaukee," he said.

As part of today's ordinance vote, those fines have doubled from \$100 to \$500 per violation to \$500 to \$1,000 per violation. Failure to pay fines can also result in up to 40 days' jail time. Today's legislation also assesses parents and legal guardians a fine of up to \$1,000 for allowing minors to use fireworks, a move that solidifies the goal of the Fireworks Task Force.

"Our charge is to help prevent injuries, fires and disorder in our neighborhoods, parks and public spaces and doubling fines helps to demonstrate our resolve to make Milwaukee safer," Ald. Witkowski said.

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## **Fireworks Ordinance/ADD ONE**

Ald. Joe Davis, Sr., co-chair of the Fireworks Task Force, said the task force was created in 2006 after calls and complaints prompted him to action. "We have neighborhoods that started to resemble war zones during the height of summer, on and around the Fourth of July, and at New Year's," Ald. Davis said.

"Today's support by the Public Safety Committee helps the Fireworks Task Force in its mission to make our streets and celebrations safer for all involved and I'm especially pleased with the attention to keeping minors safe through these stiffer penalties," Ald. Davis said.

The Task Force presented its recommendations to the Common Council last year after evaluating the City of Milwaukee's fireworks ordinance, state law and surrounding municipalities' fireworks ordinances. It invited speakers and listened to testimony from representatives from the city's Safety Commission and Safety Division, the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office, the Wisconsin Attorney General's Office and the Milwaukee County District Attorney, John Chisholm.

Ald. Witkowski reiterated the point that fireworks "permits" issued by sellers in other counties and other communities are not valid in the City of Milwaukee. "Those permits are meaningless and will not protect anyone who possesses or sets off fireworks in Milwaukee," he said.

The ordinance now goes before the full Common Council for a vote on March 18, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.