

Presentation by:

# **Cultural Organizations**

November 15, 2010

Attached is the testimony that was given to the City and County meeting to ban fireworks.

I will be more than happy to talk more about it, if any members of the committee have any questions about the usage of firecrackers in the religious and cultural aspect when we perform the lion and dragon blessings.

Mahalo, Ernie Loo

July 30, 2010

To the Honolulu City Council  
Ref: Fireworks Ban,

Members of the Honolulu City Council,

I am writing to you in opposition to the pending Fireworks Bill banning consumer usage of fireworks. It does not make sense to punish the majority because a few people abuse the laws.

I am a member of various Chinese societies, associations, and lion dance groups that use firecrackers throughout the whole year. We use it for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, deities' birthdays, parades, grand openings, house warming, graduations, religious holidays, ground breaking, burial and ancestors' offerings, yakadoshi, etc. As usual, I will secure all the necessary fireworks permit whenever we use firecrackers.

Firecrackers are used to celebrate any happy event, announcing to the heavens for their gods to come down to earth to partake in a joyous occasion, offerings to the various Taoist shrines, scaring off evil spirits on the property, etc. It is noted that the evil spirits are afraid of the flashing and fiery flames, loud pops and smoke. Red paper firecrackers are used to welcome the Chinese New Year with the Chinese lion and dragon dances. During housewarming celebrations, firecrackers are burned at all four corners of the property including the front door and back doors. It is one unique custom that we cherish. It is even burned at the golf course to start golf tournaments. During Ching Ming season, white paper firecrackers used to send the good family spirits away back up to heaven. Firecrackers are burned to bless the burial plot before the coffin is lowered. Whenever we have new lion costumes from China, we give them a new life in a Hoi Gong ceremony and burn lots of firecrackers to welcome them.

In Hawaii, it's burned as a tradition for good luck for the newlyweds, birthday person, welcoming VIPs, new business openings, and many other joyous events. It's not only used by the Chinese people, but all nationalities. On many occasions, we have performed lion dances with firecrackers to attract attention to store openings. Whenever our Chinese lions visit the Chinese and Buddhist temples, firecrackers are burned to welcome them. It is burned during legal hours and a controlled environment. A lion dance is not a lion dance without the exciting sounds of firecrackers burning in the background.

During our Chinese New Year's celebrations, there are visitors from all over the world that emails me in regards to what dates and where we are performing

with firecrackers. Their biggest delight is watching the annual Chinatown Open House where the lion groups are dancing and prancing all over the burning firecrackers. I have danced with my organization for over forty years, so I am speaking from experience. I have learned a lot about the importance of firecrackers in regards to the proper usage and respect from my Sifu.

In making your decision, please keep this tradition alive. Don't let a few people destroy the happiness for so many other responsible people.

Mahalo Nui Loa,

Ernest Loo

Lung Kong Physical Culture Club – co-chairman  
Chinatown Business and Community Association – director  
Yeung Dak Dragon and Lion Dance Association – director  
United Chinese Coalition - member  
Chung Wah Chung Kung Hui - member  
Chinese Chamber of Commerce – member  
Chee Kung Tong Society – member  
Lung Kong Kung Shaw Society - member  
See Yup Society – member  
Buddha Light International – Hawaii - member

**Robert W.C. Wong**  
**252-A-Kalama Street**  
**Kailua, Hawaii 96734**

**September 24,2010**

**Mr. Kirk Caldwell - Acting Mayor**  
**City & County of Honolulu**  
**530 S. King Street**  
**Honolulu, Hawaii 96813**

**Re: Bill 34, CD2 (Regulating the use of Firecrackers)**

**Dear Sir,**

**As a active member of the Chinese Community and a Ritual Practitioner of the Chinese cultural Events that takes place thru out the year. We, including myself and the People of this Wonderful State, who I've talk to are asking for your consideration to look further into this matter before Signing this bill in to law.**

**Firstly, if I may tell you a story of how the Chinese from a far away land came to Hawaii to start a new life and intergraded into the community, which we all know as Honolulu, And brought with them a profound teaching and Culture from their Homeland, In their upbringing they were thought to respect their Family as well as their Ancestors this is call "FILIAL PIETY," Filial Piety is one the True virtues in Chinese Families, It's when a person obeys his parents and elders as well as keeping peace and harmony in the family, by following their Teachings from their Ancestor's to the present (1) Taking Care of the Parents when they become ill. (2) Helping them with the Housework, Chores and the Shopping, Cooking. (3) Taking Care of the Business or Restaurant. (4) Helping them with their daily activities in the old age. And lastly (5) Finding them a nice Resting place, to be buried properly upon passing away.**

*Secondly, one important factor is the Times for The Chinese New Years Eve and New Year's Day Schedule, In Hawaii a lot of the Chinese people Look at a Tong Sing or Tung Shu (Chinese Farmer's Almanac) Most of us are familiar with the 24 hours of the day. However, The Chinese 'clock' if you like, has only 12 hours. begin from 11:00 p.m. to 01:00 a.m. , 01:00 a.m. to 03:00 a.m. , 03:00 a.m. to 05:00 a.m. , and so forth, to find a "Auspicious Hour" to pay respects to Heaven and the ancestor's. We the people are explaining how we do this every Chinese New Year as well as Ching Ming Festival are asking you to allow the Chinese people / Community to start their Chinese New Year's Eve celebration from 4:00 p.m. on the Eve and end at 1:00 a.m. And Begin 07:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Chinese New Year's Day. Because there are times in the morning people celebrate before they go to work or when they return home. This includes "Ching Ming Festival which begin on April 5, to May 5. And Leap Year April 4, to May 4. Hours 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.*

### **"HISTORY OF FIRECRACKERS"**

*Firecrackers / Traditionally set off to guard against evil spirits and ensure peace and fortune for the upcoming year, firecrackers are synonymous with New Year. They are also ignited for many other celebrations, including Weddings or the opening of a Business, more to add a festive and auspicious atmosphere, than to frighten away evil spirits. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), gunpowder was placed inside bamboo stems to create an exploding bamboo sound: Pao Jeong Ping On which means "Wishing you Peace". is symbolized by a boy lighting a firecracker because bamboo is pronounced the same as "to wish". In the Song Dynasty (907-1279), people began manufacturing firecrackers using paper tubes instead of bamboo, attaching them together to form a string of firecrackers. They are always red to scare off the beast nihn, who fears that color. Throughout the New Year celebration, people wear red clothes and hang red Lanterns as well as set off firecrackers. Legend say of a ferocious mythical monster, nihn whose name means "year" once terrorized the common people. He lived in the remote mountains and emerged once every New Year's Eve to prey on humans. The people battling the monster at last realized he was afraid of noise, Light and the color red. They also discovered that bamboo placed in the fire would pop and crack loudly, as heat caused the air inside the jointed stems to expand, shattering the bamboo with as explosive sound and scaring away the beast. Thus the first firecrackers were invented.*

*List of the following supporters in the Chinese Community.*

*Mr. Robert W.C. Wong - 1<sup>st</sup> V.P. "Chung Wah Chung Kung Hui & Wong Mung Duck Tong" Secretary & Trustee For Lin Yee Chung (Manoa Cemetery) Association.*

*Mr. Ernest W.G. Loo Co-Chairman "Lung Kong Physical Culture Club"*

*Mr. Douglas D.L. Chong -President "Gook Doo Association Society" "Hawaii Chinese Buddhist Society (Tan Wah Temple) Hawaii Chinese History Center -President, Hoo Cha Sha Society -President, Chinese Secretary - Mo Hock Ke Lock Bo(Mun Lun School).*

*Mr. Stanford B.C. Yuen -President "Chung Wah Chung Kung Hui" & "Mun Lun Alumni Association".*

*Mr. Tim Law -President "Association of Chinese from Vietnam, Cambodia & Laos"*

*Mr. Danny S.M. Young -President "Buck Toy Club" "Leong Doo Society"*

*Mr. Chris Jose -President "Chinese Lion Dance Association"*

*Ms. Cynthia Wong Lai -President "Duck Doo Society"*

*Mr. Harry C.Y. Wong - Director " Guang Zhong Chinese Music Ensemble"*

*Mr. Leo B. Young -President "Hawaii Chinese Civic Association"*

*Mr. Wesley K.H. Kam -President "Kam's Society"*

*Mr. Cyril B. Wong -Commander "Kau Tom Post 11 American Legion"*

*Mr. Karl Chao -President "Kuo Min Tang Society"*

*Mr. Samuel C. Luke - President "Lin Yee Chung (Manoa Cemetery) Association"*

*Mr. Wendell C.K. Chu -Chairman "Lung Kong Physical Culture Club"*

*Dr. Riley G.C. Yuen -President "See Dai Doo Society"*

*Mr. Edward W.O. Wong -President "Wong Mung Duck Tong" 1<sup>st</sup> V.P. United Chinese Society & Chung Shan Association of HI*

**THE TRUE MEANING**  
**OF**  
**FIRECRACKERS IN HAWAII**

***Brief History: Firecrackers dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, When gun powder was invented and used mainly for religious and Cultural beliefs that has been going on in HAWAII for over 150 years.***

***Examples:***

***Lion Dance Clubs and Chinese Priest in Hawaii always use Firecracker in their religious Ritual to start and to end the Ceremony which they perform on a weekly and monthly practice.***

***Buying a House or Home, Chinese believe that before moving in and living in the House they would ask a Chinese Priest or a Lion Dance Club to come and Bless the home and chase away all the bad luck from the area, And one the main things used were Firecrackers.***

***Weddings also use firecrackers and not only for Chinese but other ethnic back grounds too, Wishing for Good Luck, Double Happiness and prosperity in the marriage.***