

H.B. 4207

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this morning regarding H.B.4207, which would permit the decision to allow the burning of household trash from one or two family residences to be made at the local level. My name is Brad Benzing. I am a Hillsdale County Commissioner, representing the townships of Woodbridge, Amboy, Camden and Wright as well as the incorporated villages of Camden, Montgomery and Waldron. In addition, I am a Firefighter, serving with the Woodbridge Township Fire Department.

All of the townships and villages within my district allow residents to burn household waste in a metal container as currently permitted under DNR rules. All of the units of government that I represent are in favor of continuing to allow this method of waste disposal. In fact, they are quite concerned that should a ban be put into place, not only will it place an additional financial burden on their residents; it will also increase the potential for trash to be dumped alongside the roads of their townships. They have asked me to oppose any additional restrictions at either a county or state level. In addition, my Fire Chief has asked me to speak in favor of this legislation.

As a firefighter, I would like to address an unforeseen consequence of a statewide ban on the burning of household waste. When a call comes in to 911-Central Dispatch of an unknown fire or illegal burn, they must dispatch the fire department that covers that area. We as firefighters must respond. Should a statewide ban be placed into effect, we would be required to either extinguish the trash burner or request the homeowner to do so. Should they refuse, we can request the assistance of law enforcement to ensure compliance. The homeowner could potentially be charged with interfering with a firefighter in the performance of their duties. This seems a rather foolish waste of public safety resources, especially in such tight budgetary times. Additionally, the homeowner would likely be assessed a fire department "run charge" which in our county averages \$500. This could result in a very negative situation for the local fire departments as well as the village or township boards.

In closing, I would ask for your support for H.B. 4207 which would continue to allow the decision to permit or ban the burning of household waste to be made at the local level by the people who are best able to judge the needs of the area in which they live.

Thank you

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