



For Immediate Release

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**Fireworks Family Businesses Urge Congress to Act Now to Preserve the July 4th
American Fireworks Tradition**

Bethesda, MD, May 28, 2020 – Fireworks are among the most widely anticipated traditions of celebrating our nation’s independence. As the Fourth of July holiday rapidly approaches, there are widespread cancellations of community Independence Day celebrations nationwide due to social distancing mandates related to COVID-19. The skies across the vast majority of our great nation will be dark this year, and potentially forever, unless Congress provides a lifeline to the fireworks display industry in the next stimulus package.

Of the 16,000 Independence Day fireworks displays that typically occur nationwide annually in cities and towns, only a scant few will occur this year, according to the American Pyrotechnics Association (APA). These nationwide cancellations have created significant and unique financial hardship for the small, multi-generational family businesses who derive their livelihood from bringing communities together to celebrate their pride and patriotism on one day a year – Independence Day. “COVID-19 and the necessity for states, cities and townships to implement social distancing mandates has financially devastated the small family businesses who produce fireworks displays for community celebrations,” said APA Executive Director, Julie L. Heckman. “Independence Day only comes once a year; there is no do-over for the 4th of July. No other business has to rely so extensively for its livelihood on a single day,” added Heckman.

Nationwide approximately 150 small family businesses, many of which are multi-generational, comprise the American fireworks display industry. Unlike other small businesses, these businesses are unique because they earn their livelihood from producing fireworks displays for Fourth of July community celebrations. “The fireworks industry is hyper-seasonal and without Independence Day celebrations, these family businesses aren’t just losing their bread and butter but rather, their entire livelihood is severely impacted,” said Heckman.

These small family fireworks display businesses and the APA are urging Congress to help by modifying the current Economic Injury Disaster Loan program offered by the Small Business Administration (SBA) with low interest and forgivable loans. This will help these businesses bridge the gap of losing most of their income from one day, July 4, as a result of the COVID-19 virus. “We hope that Congress will take swift action to help our industry like it has helped many other industries,” said Stephen Vitale, President & CEO of Pyrotecnico, a fifth-generation family business in New Castle, PA.

Preserving & Promoting an American Tradition

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“We understand the need for social distancing and how that has forced many communities to make the tough decision to forego large public gatherings at a time when the country needs something to celebrate. Our family fireworks display businesses lose as much as 80% of their business from that one day of cancellations. They must now keep millions of pounds of fireworks safe and secure until next year, carry the cost of the investment they made into these products months ago, and try to keep their businesses afloat until then,” said Heckman.

The loans available under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) in the CARES Act were somewhat helpful to many of the small family fireworks display businesses when everyone thought there would still be July 4 celebrations. However, they were created as a short-term band aid and are not designed to help these family businesses survive until next year when firework displays, large gatherings and community celebrations resume.

About the American Pyrotechnics Association

The APA is the leading safety and trade association of the fireworks industry representing manufacturers, importers, distributors, retailers, suppliers, and professional display companies. Founded in 1948, APA’s mission is to encourage safety in the design and use of all types of fireworks, to provide industry information and support to its members, and to promote responsible regulation of the fireworks industry. Additional information about the fireworks industry can be found on APA’s website at <http://www.americanpyro.com>

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