

Bill would expand fireworks sales in California

By Hannah Madans, Sacramento Bee

In California, Fourth of July is the one holiday that gets the fireworks pass – for one summer week, starting today, you can buy sparklers and fountains to celebrate Independence Day.

In a couple of years, you may be able to hoist a champagne glass as your fireworks light up the winter sky to toast the new year.

A bill that has already passed the state Senate – unanimously – would double the weeks fireworks can be sold, from June 28 to July 4 and from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1.

A second week of sales would not only give New Year's celebrants another way to party, but also would ignite sales for wholesalers such as TNT Fireworks, the sponsor of the bill.

The companies have some key supporters in their corner – the nonprofits that set up those plywood roadside stands that dot the Sacramento area this time of year.

“The fact that we're cutting back on all the programs, safety net programs and what not, a lot of the money that nonprofits used to get, they don't get anymore,” said Sen. Ron Calderon, D-Montebello, who is carrying the measure. “The sale of fireworks on a local level helps create a lot of revenue.”

Senate Bill 1468 would add that second week for just two years, 2014 and 2015. It's pending in the Assembly.

Under current law, about 290 California communities allow nonprofit groups to sell fireworks, including churches, high school booster clubs and sports organizations.

Among them is the Rosemont Little League, whose treasurer Dennis Gallagher said fireworks sales make up 20 percent of the league's budget.

Adding more sales between Christmas and New Year's Day "would be an additional revenue stream that we would definitely pursue," he said.

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