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An Act To Prohibit the Retail Sale and Distribution of Novelty Lighters

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, novelty lighters have features that are attractive to children, including visual effects, flashing lights, musical sounds and toy-like designs; and

Whereas, the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission has recalled thousands of novelty lighters since 1996 due to their danger to public safety; and

Whereas, fire setting by juveniles has been identified as the fastest growing fire threat in the United States, with more than 300 people killed annually, 30% of whom are children, and almost \$1 billion in property destroyed; and

Whereas, in Maine, fire setting by juveniles has resulted in several deaths and millions of dollars in property damage and destruction; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 25 MRSA §2467 is enacted to read:

§ 2467. Retail sale and distribution of novelty lighters prohibited

1. Definition. For purposes of this section, "novelty lighter" means a mechanical or electrical device typically used for lighting cigarettes, cigars or pipes that is designed to appear to be a toy, feature a flashing light or make musical sounds. "Novelty lighter" does not include:

- A. A lighter manufactured prior to January 1, 1980; or
- B. A lighter lacking fuel or lacking a device necessary to produce combustion or a flame.

2. Prohibition; penalty. A person may not sell at retail or distribute for retail sale in this State a novelty lighter. A person who violates this subsection commits a civil violation for which a fine of up to \$500 may be imposed.

3. Exception. The prohibition specified in subsection 2 does not apply to the transportation of novelty lighters through this State or the storage of novelty lighters in a warehouse or distribution center in this State that is closed to the public for purposes of retail sales.

4. Enforcement. This section may be enforced by the State Fire Marshal's Office; a state, county or municipal law enforcement officer; or a municipal code enforcement officer.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This bill prohibits a person from selling or distributing for retail sale in Maine novelty lighters, which are lighters that are designed to appear to be a toy, feature a flashing light or make musical sounds. Violation is a civil infraction.