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Representative Willhite Files Local Bill on Behalf of the Village of Wellington

Tallahassee, Fla. – House **Representative Matt Willhite (D-Wellington)** files **[HB 979](#)**, a bill aimed at prohibiting the sale and use of fireworks located within the equestrian preserves in the Village of Wellington. The Village of Wellington is known as the Winter Equestrian Capital of the world, hosting the thousands of spectators during the winter months that travel to Wellington to enjoy various equestrian sporting events. During the season, Wellington houses approximately 13,000 highly valuable horses that are bred and trained to compete in various equestrian sports. The owners of these horses devote an immense amount of time, energy, and financial resources to these valuable animals' care and training.

It is well documented that horses are startled by loud noises, and they are particularly frightened of fireworks. In anticipation of holidays celebrated throughout the year, the Village of Wellington receives numerous requests for assistance from those living in the equestrian community who are concerned for their horses' safety. When horses are startled, it is common for them to gallop and tremble, and as a result, can cause injury on these prized animals.

In 2007, the Legislature created the Consumer Fireworks Task Force. As part of this 2007 law, the Legislature directed local governments not to adopt any ordinance after March 8, 2007, that interferes with safety standards put forth by the Legislature. In 2020, the Legislature adopted legislation that allows fireworks on designated holidays – allowing Wellington residents to set off fireworks. Moreover, Wellington cannot regulate the use of fireworks within its equestrian preserve because it did not have any ordinances in place before March 8, 2007. **HB 979** aims to give Wellington the ability to regulate fireworks only within its Equestrian Preserve area.

After filing this legislation, **Representative Willhite** issued the following statement.

"Wellington is a unique community, known for our equestrian sports. Every year,

thousands travel to the Winter Equestrian Capital of the world. These equestrian sports are an economic driver for the Village. Because of Wellington's unique circumstances, it is crucial that this local bill be passed. Without it, Wellington will be unable to protect its equestrian citizens and their horses from the use of fireworks throughout the community on designated holidays."

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