

Urban Experiential Displays Bill No. 140906-A

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Bill 140906 proposes brightly lit advertising structures. The legislation includes a minimum size of 1,500 SF of illuminated advertising panels, so for example, a minimum 6' square by 58' tall. Or let's say you wanted one to look like a typical three story rowhouse, it might be 16' wide by 30' high by 3' deep. We're not talking kiosks. We're talking about the house next door lit up like a billboard on I-95. And that's just the display. There appears to be no limit on the size of the structure. The maximum (u)nits of illumination have been eliminated.

These giant objects are purely commercial, no matter what kind of dressing you all try to put on them. They will degrade our public spaces and depress real estate values for the first ten floors of any building within sight of them. Mr. Squilla is quoted in the Daily News today as saying, *"The thing that matters the most are the people in the community,"*

So in his opinion, people like bright lights shining in their bedroom or office windows. People flock to their TV's whenever WHYY has a fundraising marathon because people just love public service announcements. People never mute the TV or run to the bathroom during commercials, because they find them artistic.

Along the way, as a particularly sad smokescreen for raw profit taking, four of our downtown non-profits have been dragged into the mix by way of Community Benefit Agreements. Organizations that will receive between \$62,500 and \$320,414 per year are Avenue of the Arts, Friends of the Rail Park, Avenue North Renaissance and Reading Terminal Market Association.

While these are worthy causes, why are they singled out for support and protection in a city with so many needs? What public policy is advanced by this bill? Why was a City Council member so involved in these arrangements that until last week these four groups were part of the legislation? How can any District Councilperson in good conscience vote against her own neighborhood?

This bill will become law today. It will pass unanimously, as what is fondly known in Philadelphia as a "Councilmanic Prerogative Bill". This bill will begin a new tradition for that practice, with prerogative extending, you might say, beyond the grave, as Mr. DiCicco casts his vote with cash to Council members.



But this being an election season, I respectfully ask that some Council members recognize that public support for this bill is bogus - 371 almost laughable, almost identical letters submitted by those who will receive money if the bill is passed. That this bill offers harm to our public spaces and nothing to our tax coffers. And that this bill will continue to diminish the stature of City Council every time one of these gaudy monsters comes before the Art Commission.

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