

BB

MOTION

Nitrous oxide, also referred to as NO₂, N₂O, dinitrogen monoxide, dinitrogen oxide, nitrogen oxide, or laughing gas, is a trending drug that is extremely addictive, harmful, and now more than ever, easily accessible at smoke and tobacco shops across the City. When inhaled, nitrous oxide can lead to strokes, paralysis, heart failure and death from asphyxiation. It can be purchased in small “whippet” canisters, originally designed for making whipped cream, and in medium to large industrial tanks, in which the gas is dispensed into balloons for inhalation.

California law allows individuals 18 years and older to purchase nitrous oxide, as long as it is not inhaled after purchase. This restriction was created to allow for nitrous oxide common use in culinary and automotive practices. However, this makes the law difficult to enforce and allows vendors, such as smoke shops and liquor stores, to sell nitrous oxide products. Vendors have now even introduced flavored nitrous oxide onto shelves. Studies have shown that adding flavors and colorful packaging to drug products play a key role in youth initiation and continued use.

Nitrous oxide presents a danger to children and adults alike. On December 26, 2023, a violent hit and run incident occurred in South LA, killing a 72-year-old man. The driving suspect, and at least three others, were seen running from the vehicle and taking a nitrous oxide tank with them. A purple balloon was also later found in the vehicle. On June 4, 2024, a violent head-on crash in Playa del Rey killed two teenage boys and wounded three people. Inside the vehicle, authorities identified containers of nitrous oxide.

The Los Angeles Unified School District reports that during the 2023-2024 school year, 11 incidents of possession of nitrous oxide took place, an increase from the 2022-2023 school year which only reported one incident. In 2017, the City of Rialto became the first city in the nation to ban the sale or distribution of nitrous oxide, with the exception of sales of the gas for lawful medical and industrial use. City of Rialto officials have stated that their aggressive approach was intended to prevent the untimely and unnecessary deaths of their youth. In order to prevent negative impacts to our communities, it is time for the City to address this growing issue.

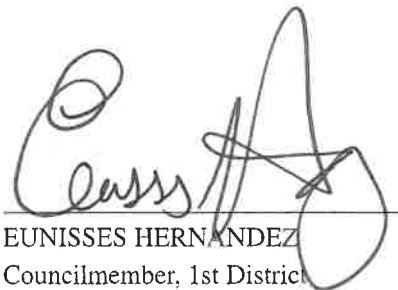
I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the City Council request the City Attorney report back, in 60 days, with a study of the City of Rialto’s 2017 ordinance. The report should include what mechanisms were used for enforcement, how violations were weighed amongst adults, youth, and other demographics, and any challenges that may have been presented during the ordinances roll out. The report should also include recommendations for an ordinance that would prohibit the sale or distribution of nitrous oxide in the City of Los Angeles.

CO-PRESENTED BY:



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