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# Republican Senators Demand Action to Curb Pop-Up Riots

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## Mayhem in Wildwood is Only the Latest Incident in a Disturbing Trend

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“The dreadful activity in Wildwood was completely out of control and totally unacceptable. It was preventable, and it should never have happened, but the Legislature and the Attorney General dropped the ball,” said Senator Joe Pennacchio (R-26), noting that 15 months ago he [introduced legislation \(S-1206\)](#) with Senate colleague Bob Singer targeting pop-up mobs and those who incite them.

“There is nothing spontaneous or organic about these riots,” Pennacchio continued. “They are planned and orchestrated for the purpose of breaking laws, intimidating residents, and taunting

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authorities. This will continue to happen until the legislative leaders in Trenton step up.”

Pennacchio and Singer’s legislation was first introduced in June 2021 after thousands of agitators, lured to Long Branch by tantalizing social media posts, descended on the Shore town. The uncontrolled crowds prowled the streets, disrupting businesses, damaging property, and unsettling residents and tourists.

Social media again played a role in bringing trouble and the unsanctioned car rally to Wildwood streets already bustling with visitors in town for the annual Wildwoods Irish Festival.

“The tragic loss of life in Wildwood should serve as a wake-up call for anyone who thinks the concerns we raised about pop-up parties over the past year are overblown,” said Singer (R-30), who [called on Governor Murphy](#) and the Attorney General’s office to create a task force to prevent similar occurrences and protect coastal communities in May, a day after Long Branch was invaded by yet another large social media-provoked crowd.

“I hope that after the loss of life in Cape May County, the Administration will finally act on our request to create a task force of state and local officials who can work together to develop an effective coordinated plan to respond to future mass gatherings.”

The [H2oi event](#) that invaded Wildwood on Saturday has a problematic history. [In 2019](#), an adult and child were struck by a vehicle when the rally was held in Ocean City, Md. At that time, the [mayor said](#) the recklessness “placed our town, as well as our citizens and visitors, under siege and in danger.”

The following year, the police in Ocean City had more than 350 cars towed or impounded and issued more than 3,000 tickets during H2oi 2020.

“Communities up and down the coast have been targeted and this disturbing trend continues, placing crucial Shore economies at risk,” said Senator Michael Testa (R-1). “Local businesses and families suffer from the actions of out-of-control rioters stirred up by a mob mentality.

“The police in targeted towns are outnumbered and overwhelmed, unable to protect their communities or maintain public safety when thousands of rowdies suddenly show up with little or no warning,” added Testa. “Until the Governor’s Administration engages with legislators and local officials who are calling for a coordinated plan that includes state support, incidents like this will become more frequent and more dangerous.”

The bill sponsored by Pennacchio and Singer ([S-1206](#)) broadens the legal definition of “riot,” and increases penalties for crimes committed during a riot.

Under the bill, municipalities have the duty to allow the police to respond appropriately to protect persons and property during a riot or an unlawful assembly based on the availability of adequate equipment to its municipal law enforcement officers and relevant state and federal laws.