

## Model rocket enthusiasts fight new restrictions

It has been popular with school kids, Boy Scouts and others for nearly 50 years.

But now, model-rocket enthusiasts, including those in Lancaster County, are among those fighting an anti-terrorism provision that could kill the hobby.

The National Association of Rocketry and its local affiliate, the Southern Pennsylvania Association of Rocketry, are backing the efforts of U.S. Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyoming), to amend part of the Homeland Security Act.

The hobbyists object to the measure that has reclassified ammoni-

um perchlorate, the solid propellant used in model-rocket engines, as an explosive.

The legislation, signed by President Bush in November and to take effect May 24, would require ATF permits, background checks and fingerprinting for anyone who wants to buy or ship a model-rocket engine.

Permit-holders would have to keep records that could be inspected by ATF agents, and if they keep those records at home, the homes would be subject to ATF inspections.

Enzi and SPAAR president Dale Greene of Elizabethtown believe the ATF made a mistake by claiming the

primary use of the rocket propellant is as an explosive.

"We wouldn't be using them if they were explosives," Greene said.

Model rocketry became a national hobby with the introduction of mass-produced rocket engines in 1958.

Greene, an NAR member since 1968, says model rockets have an extremely good track record, and that they can be flown repeatedly just simply by replacing the used engine with a fresh one.

"The safety record of the hobby is virtually spotless," he said. "There must be more skateboard accidents and injuries in a week than during all 45 years of model rocketry."