



## Reducing Litter from Balloons

### Support: LD 937

### An Act Regarding the Sale and Release or Abandonment of Balloons

**Sponsored by:** Rep. Michael Devin  
of Newcastle

**Planned balloon releases in Maine have received positive coverage in the media, but their significant damage to the environment is largely hidden from public view. More education and action is needed to raise awareness about the dangers caused by these large balloon releases.**

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*Planned releases of balloons into the environment have deadly and damaging consequences that are largely unrecognized by organizers. Maine youth have spoken out against this danger and are urging action to prevent the harm done by balloon releases.*

#### **LD 937 is a common sense bill other states have passed that would simply:**

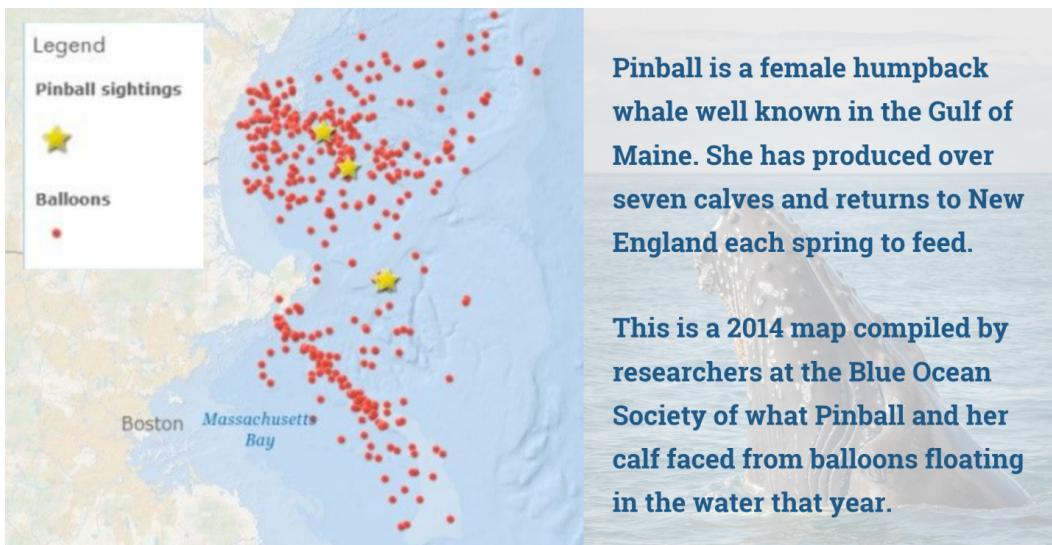
- Amend an existing law to classify balloons as litter, which would prohibit the intentional release or abandonment of balloons, such as planned mass balloon releases.
- Require that balloon retailers warn customers of the choking, allergy, and environmental risks of balloons, which is recommended by balloon producers.

When children learn about the dangers of large scale balloon releases, they no longer find them to be fun. Likewise, as adults have learned about the dangers posed by balloons, they have found many other—and better—ways to celebrate, decorate, or honor a loved one than by releasing harmful balloons into the environment.

#### **Here are some startling facts:**

- **Balloons are not biodegradable, and they persist in the environment for decades.** The danger from balloons comes from their inability to be broken down in the mouth and stomach of animals like birds and fish. Ribbons dangling from balloons risk entangling wildlife. No one would tolerate the purposeful release of other polluting plastic products, like plastic bottles or plastic bags. Balloons should not be exempted.
- **Balloons are the leading cause of choking deaths in children.** About 38 percent of all toy-related choking deaths reported between 2001 and 2014 involved balloons. Most balloon accidents involved children under the age of 6.
- **Balloons cause more deaths in seabirds than any other kind of marine debris.** Researchers found that balloons are 32 times more likely to result in death in seabirds than ingesting hard plastic.

- **Balloons have been the most-recorded trash floating in Jeffrey's Ledge Marine Sanctuary in the Gulf of Maine for at least 11 years and are the 15th most commonly littered item found in clean-ups across the U.S.** In 2015-16 researchers at the Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation in Portsmouth, NH, found 700 balloons in the Gulf of Maine and 400 along the Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire coast.



**Other states are protecting their environment and oceans, and in doing so, the animals that live in them, by properly regulating balloon releases. Maine should, too. States and cities with balloon release laws include** California; Connecticut; Florida; Tennessee; Virginia; Ocean City, Maryland; Louisville, Kentucky; Nantucket, Massachusetts; Provincetown, Massachusetts; and Block Island, Rhode Island.

**Creating litter that kills animals is not a good way to celebrate or honor a loved one. We should opt instead for actions that promote life, such as planting trees or gardens, or organizing a clean-up or fundraiser for a good cause.**



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