



Reducing Litter from Balloons

Support:

LD 618 An Act Regarding the Outdoor Release or Abandonment of Balloons

Sponsored by: Rep. Lydia Blume of York

LD 1023 An Act to Define Intentional Balloon Releases as Litter

Sponsored by: Rep. Genevieve McDonald of Stonington

Co-sponsored by: Rep. Berry of Bowdoinham, Rep. Fay of Raymond, Rep. Grohoski of Ellsworth, Rep. Harnett of Gardiner, Rep. Hepler of Woolwich, Rep. O'Neil of Saco, Rep. Stover of Boothbay

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LD 618 and LD 1023 are common-sense bills similar to ones other states have already passed. They would simply amend an existing law to clarify balloons as litter when they end up in the environment, which would effectively prohibit the intentional release or abandonment of balloons.

What You Need to Know about Balloon Releases

Balloons are not biodegradable, and they persist in the environment for decades. One danger from balloons is that they don't break down in the mouth and stomach of animals like birds and fish. Another is that strings 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 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 when they ingest hard plastic.

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.

Instead of deadly mass balloon releases, event organizers should opt for actions that promote life, such as planting trees or gardens, or organizing a clean-up or fundraiser for a good cause.

Planned balloon releases in Maine have received positive coverage in the media, but the significant suffering they inflict on wildlife and damage they cause to the environment is hidden from the public view. More education and action is needed to raise awareness about the dangers caused by the release of balloons into the environment.