

HOUSE BILL REPORT

1033

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs*

Title: An act relating to the release of lighter-than-air balloons.

Brief Description: Prohibiting the release of lighter than air balloons.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Jacobsen, Appelwick, Dellwo, Roland, Ferguson, Rust and Paris.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs, February 8, 1991, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 8 members: Representatives Rust, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Edmondson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; G. Fisher; Neher; Pruitt; and Sprenkle.

Minority Report: *Do not pass.* Signed by 5 members: Representatives Horn, Ranking Minority Member; Brekke; Phillips; D. Sommers; and Van Luven.

Staff: Harry Reinert 786-7110.

Background: The release of large numbers of balloons at celebrations and other events has caused some concern about the potential impact on animals and the environment. The concerns are that the balloons, when they descend, may be swallowed by marine or land animals resulting in injury or death, that animals may become entangled in balloons that are tied together, and that they will litter shorelines and other natural areas. There is also some risk of power outages when certain types of balloons become entangled with power lines.

The balloon industry disputes some of the claims made by opponents of balloon releases. The industry claims that balloons which are made of latex and some other substances break apart into small pieces when they reach the upper

atmosphere. They also claim that balloons will biodegrade within a relatively short period of time.

At least three states -- Florida, Connecticut, and Tennessee -- have enacted statutes which restrict to some degree the release of balloons.

Summary of Amended Bill: The intentional release of 10 or more balloons in a 24-hour period is prohibited. The prohibition does not apply to scientific experiments or hot air balloons which are recovered.

A violation of the prohibition is a class 1 civil infraction. The maximum penalty for a class 1 civil infraction is \$250.

A person may petition the district court to prevent a violation of the statute.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill permitted a petition to either the superior court or the district court to enjoin the release of balloons. The amended bill provides only for a petition to the district court.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Balloons which are released into the air can harm animals who swallow or become entangled in them. They are also a litter problem.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Prime Sponsor; Casey Lane, Assumption School (pro); Kathy Hastings, Assumption School (pro); Michelle Wilson, Assumption School (pro); Michael Worth, Assumption School (pro); Erin Brookefield, Assumption School (pro); and Jack Lovejoy, Assumption School (pro).