

(Balloons)

URGING THE CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO TO PROHIBIT THE
INTENTIONAL RELEASE OF ALL BALLOONS INTO THE AIR WITHIN SAN
FRANCISCO

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the federal government has recognized burst mylar and plastic balloons as a commonly reported source of marine debris¹; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, approximately 30 percent of the 32,028 balloons that were collected during U.S. coastal cleanup effort were found in California²; and

WHEREAS, balloons can travel and land hundreds of miles from their release site³; and

WHEREAS, balloons often end up in rivers, estuaries and oceans⁴; and

WHEREAS, balloons drift onto the surface of water and mimic the appearance of jellyfish and other floating organisms that are a natural food source for turtles, fish, dolphins, and shorebirds⁵; and

¹ Cottingham, David. Persistent Marine Debris: Challenge and Response, National Atmospheric and Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1988. p. 5-6.

² California Coastal Commission.

³ Center for Marine Conservation Fact Sheet, *Balloons and the Marine Environment – A Response to the Balloon Industry*, Washington D.C.

⁴ Muir, Bill. As quoted in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region III Press Release. *Balloons – A Threat to Shorebirds and Marine Life*, EPA, Region III Press Release. Philadelphia, 3 April 1996.

⁵ Center for Marine Conservation Fact Sheet, *Balloons and the Marine Environment – A Response to the Balloon Industry*, Washington D.C.

WHEREAS, balloons can be ingested by animals who mistake them for food⁶; and

WHEREAS, the ingestion of balloons can choke, smother and entangle animals or cause animals to starve to death⁷; and

WHEREAS, dead turtles have been found washed up on beaches with balloons hanging out of their mouths⁸; and

WHEREAS, whales are known to ingest pounds of balloons and plastics, causing death by starvation⁹; and

WHEREAS, balloon strings have been documented as items that entangle marine birds and other creatures¹⁰; and

WHEREAS, the San Francisco Parks and Recreation Department has stopped all mass balloon releases associated with their parks and recreation facilities¹¹; and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service has called for a national ban on the releasing of balloons within designated National Parks¹²; and

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Muir, Bill. As quoted in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region III Press Release. *Balloons – A Threat to Shorebirds and Marine Life*, EPA, Region III Press Release. Philadelphia, 3 April 1996.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Center for Marine Conservation Fact Sheet, *Balloons and the Marine Environment – A Response to the Balloon Industry*, Washington D.C.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

WHEREAS, the White House and the U.S. Navy have voluntarily suspended mass balloon launch activities¹³; and

WHEREAS, Walt Disney World and Six Flags Great Adventure have discontinued mass balloon releases¹⁴; and

WHEREAS, several states and cities have enacted legislation prohibiting or restricting the release of balloons¹⁵; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Commission on the Environment urges the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco to prohibit the intentional release of all balloons into the air within San Francisco.

I hereby certify that this resolution was adopted by the Commission on the Environment at its regular meeting on September 18, 2000.

Sraddha Mehta

Commission Secretary

VOTE:

Ayes: *Commissioners Hayes, Shah, Werbe, and Bradford-Bell.*

Noes: *None.*

Absent: *Commissioners Bingham, Evans, and Chang*

¹³ Center for Marine Conservation Fact Sheet, *Balloons and the Marine Environment – A Response to the Balloon Industry*, Washington D.C.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*