



OFFICE OF SENATOR SABINA FLORES PEREZ

Chairperson

Committee on Environment, Revenue and Taxation, and Procurement

I MINA'TRENTAI SINGKO NA LIHESLATURAN GUÁHAN

35TH GUAM LEGISLATURE

PRESS RELEASE

For World Oceans Day, Senator Perez Introduces Bill to End Balloon Littering

Guam, June 7, 2019 – Today Senator Sabina Perez introduced Bill 161-35 to end littering resulting from balloon releases into Guam's atmosphere.

The legislation stems from numerous complaints in recent weeks from constituents witnessing organized, often commercial, releases of balloons over Guam's protected marine preserves.

Guam law currently bans littering "upon" highways and land, and "into" water, but does not address balloons released into air. "Due to this quirk in wording, authorities can't enforce the littering law unless they witness the balloon landing," said Senator Perez. Lighter-than-air balloons stay afloat anywhere from 8 hours to 5 days. "Guam EPA wants to end this practice, but their hands are tied. They agree the law needs to be corrected," she added.

All balloon releases result in harmful littering. Balloons land on public and private property, forcing others to deal with the trash, or they land in Guam's waters, polluting our preserves, and potentially choking turtles and other marine life. The problem is significant – plastic balloons make up the third largest amount of plastic in our oceans after bags and fishing nets. Even the Balloon Council, an industry trade group of balloon manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and retailers, agrees that balloon releases are an environmentally damaging practice that must be stopped.

This Saturday, June 8th, is World Oceans Day, a global celebration of oceans and a reminder to protect our fragile environment. "By banning balloon releases, we're protecting and honoring the marine ecosystem that has sustained us for centuries," said Senator Perez.

Bill 161-35 will immediately ban the release of balloons into the air by including the practice alongside other forms of littering. The bill provides an exemption for scientific or meteorological balloons released under the authority of government agencies.

"Every year, thousands of balloons are released into Guam's air. Every single one drops as plastic debris, polluting our land and our waters, and endangering our wildlife," said Senator Perez. "It's shocking that this practice is effectively legal," she added.

"Balloon releases harm our environment. It's nothing more than delayed littering, and it needs to stop," said Senator Perez.

###