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Containing the Drift: Legal and Outreach Strategies to Mitigate Mylar Balloon Risks

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Abstract

Mylar foil balloon pollution has emerged as an overlooked yet significant danger in the broader crisis of global water pollution. Since the issue was first addressed in the United States with the 1972 Ocean Dumping Act, only a handful of states have introduced laws to expand regulations on this type of seawater pollution. As a result, oceanic pollution has continued to rise. Consequently, a framework for nonprofit advocacy groups and policymakers alike is needed to change current regulations.

A specific seawater polluter is Mylar foil balloons. These non-biodegradable, mass-produced balloons persist in the seawater environment while also leading to blackouts from wire entanglements.

This report seeks to provide the Ocean Conservation Society with a summary of past statewide regulations on Mylar balloon pollution, from which we have developed recommendations for achieving effective change through both legislation and public campaigns. Using specific existing statewide bills and their associated campaigns in California and Virginia, this report will provide an outline of what role the Ocean Conservation Society can play in supporting the modification and introduction of new legislation at the California state level. Beginning with several California ordinances that regulate balloon usage, this analysis identifies both a successful model and areas for improvement. Similarly, in Virginia, the connection between advocacy and policy is examined, outlining how OCS can participate in political discourse and policy change.

Overall, this report offers a new comprehensive framework in which several ordinances and bills serve as a foundation for how an advocacy group can bring about tangible change. We present a critique and analysis of previous campaigns and policies targeting Mylar balloon pollution, from which a recommended holistic structure is presented for the Ocean Conservation Society to use in the future.

Context: Mylar Balloons — The Secret Killer

Ever since their creation and popularization in the 1970s, Mylar foil balloons have been an issue on land and at sea, yet, they are rarely discussed in climate change and pollution reduction debates. While initially developed for industrial use, the shiny appearance and durable exterior of the Mylar balloon made it popular among the general consumer.¹ These balloons are made up of non-biodegradable metallicized plastic and foil films, allowing them to persist in ecosystems indefinitely, posing an severe risk to wildlife.² Mylar balloons are most commonly filled with helium, resulting in ill-advised releases and improper disposal, as they frequently end up in the open ocean or in high-set structures such as powerlines. Due to this, Mylar balloon pollution can have a high economic cost, as resources are expended on balloon litter cleanup.³ Once in the open ocean, these balloons result in frequent ingestion by and entanglement of marine animals, such as seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals, negatively impacting marine life and industries.⁴ Furthermore, Mylar's high conductivity incurs substantial financial costs as the balloons cause severe power outages with tens of thousands of customers impacted each year.⁵

Despite the substantial risks posed by them, only a handful of policies exist limiting Mylar balloon sales and release. Sales limitations began in California in 1990, requiring the balloons to be disposed of properly and to always be fixed to a weighted object. While a complete phase-out was vetoed in 2008⁶, a partial one, including conductive testing by independent bodies, has been implemented.⁷ Since 2020, several additional states, including Maryland, Florida, Virginia, and Hawaii, have introduced plans to completely phase out foil balloon sales as well.

Despite the efforts to mitigate Mylar balloon sale and release, there still exists a major need for a comprehensive framework outlining how advocacy groups can influence broader policy change. While volunteer cleanups and social media campaigns have been implemented over the course of the last decade, more direct action is required to fully eradicate this persistent issue. Similar to the Ocean Conservation Society's "Be Whale Aware" campaign, a multi-faceted approach is required from these groups to effectively enact change. Reviewing past legislation and campaigns is necessary to ensure continued impact and forms the basis of this report.

Case Study 1: Local and Statewide Regulations in California

This section will demonstrate an existing framework for the successful implementation of the local and statewide Mylar balloon limitations. Using various case studies from California, we have developed recommendations for enacting new and improving current Mylar balloon regulations.

State Bill 847

The California Assembly Bill 847 was introduced to require those who manufacture a foil balloon to permanently mark the balloon with specified information. This information included the risks associated with releasing foil balloons, particularly the potential for contact with overhead power lines, and a statement confirming that the balloon complies with the requirements of the bill. The bill defines a foil or Mylar balloon as a balloon made from an electrically conductive material. It mandates permanent labeling that warns consumers of the dangers associated with releasing foil balloons, identifies the manufacturer, and certifies compliance with the law where applicable.⁸ AB 847 also establishes safety standards requiring foil balloons to pass a high-voltage test approved by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), with compliance phased in over four years and full compliance required thereafter. People who violate the provisions are subject to strict penalties: they must pay 50 USD per noncompliant balloon.¹ The policy was passed on September 17th, 2022.

The policy was overall quite effective; however, its effectiveness can mainly be attributed to the fact that many cities had enacted bans or restrictions on Mylar balloons before the passage of AB 847. By 2020, Glendale, Hermosa, and Malibu had prohibited the sale and distribution of Mylar balloons⁹, indicating broad local recognition of the associated safety and environmental risks. These preexisting municipal measures suggest that AB 847, and statewide bills in general, build upon an established regulatory foundation rather than introducing an entirely new policy directive. As a result, the bill's long-term goals of phasing out Mylar balloon sales statewide by 2027 and treating noncompliant balloons as illegal contraband by 2031¹⁰ are more feasible within an environment where similar restrictions are already in place at the local level.

However, in 2025, just three years after AB 847 passed, the Torrance City Council voted against adopting a locally enforced ban on the sale and distribution of Mylar balloons.¹¹ The proposed ordinance failed in part because council members and local business representatives argued that such a ban would be duplicative of California's statewide approach under AB 847, which was already scheduled to begin the phasing approach effective January 1st, 2027.

Opponents emphasized that forthcoming state regulations and IEEE-approved testing requirements would address the risks associated with Mylar balloons without imposing additional burdens on small businesses. This decision illustrates how the anticipation of state-level regulation can discourage municipalities from pursuing interim local measures, potentially delaying immediate reductions in Mylar balloon-related hazards.

Fundamentally, AB 847 represents the model for a targeted and structured approach to reducing the public safety and environmental risks associated with Mylar balloons. Overall, it provides a coherent statewide framework that standardizes safety expectations, but its long-term impact will depend on timely implementation and effective coordination between state and local governments to ensure that reductions in Mylar balloon-related hazards are realized in practice.

Municipal Ordinances

Coastal municipalities in California have increasingly adopted local balloon regulations in response to persistent marine debris, wildlife harm, and infrastructure risks associated with balloon releases. This analysis compares Solana Beach Ordinance 523 (2022) and Laguna Beach Ordinance 1683 (2023), highlighting differences in scope, enforcement, and effectiveness.

Solana Beach Ordinance 523 was introduced on April 27, 2022, and formally adopted by the Solana Beach City Council on May 11, 2022. The ordinance added Chapter 5.07 to the Solana Beach Municipal Code, commonly referred to as the City's "Balloon Ordinance," and became effective thirty days after adoption.

The ordinance bans "the use, sale, and distribution of any balloon inflated with a gas lighter than air," including helium and other lifting gases, within the City of Solana Beach. This prohibition applies broadly to all "persons," defined as "any person, business, corporation, or event organizer or promoter; public, nonprofit or private entity, agency or institution; or partnership, association or other organization or group, however organized."¹² The ban extends to balloons sold or distributed "as a separate item or as part of a packaged product set, and applies at any location within the city, including City Facilities and City-Sponsored Events."¹³ Unlike some comparable ordinances, such as Laguna Beach Ordinance 1683, Ordinance 523 does not include specific exemptions for private property or private events.

The ordinance defines a "balloon" as "a flexible bag, including but not limited to those made from rubber, latex, polychloroprene (neoprene), Mylar, or nylon fabric, that is designed to be inflated with a gas lighter than air, causing

it to float, or designed to be filled with water.”¹⁴ In addition to restricting use and distribution, the ordinance explicitly prohibits the disposal of any balloon inflated with a gas lighter than air in any manner other than placement in a trash container.

The stated intent of Ordinance 523 is to “establish standards and procedures for environmental waste and litter reduction measures and promote environmentally sustainable practices throughout the City.”¹⁵ The ordinance aims to supplement existing state regulations that govern balloon release and electrical safety while addressing local environmental conditions in a coastal community where balloon debris can readily enter marine ecosystems.

Support from local advocacy members of the Surfrider Foundation had a significant influence on the passage of the ordinance. Through its “Rise Above Plastics” campaign, the foundation provided beach cleanup data and studies showing that balloons released anywhere in the city frequently become coastal or marine debris. This advocacy reinforced the case for a citywide prohibition without exemptions for private events.¹⁶

However, enforcement mechanisms under Ordinance 523 remain somewhat vague. Remedies and penalties are “cumulative and not exclusive,”¹⁷ and nothing precludes the City from pursuing additional legal or administrative remedies. The City Attorney may seek legal, injunctive, or other relief to enforce compliance. Violations are enforced in accordance with Chapters 1.16 and 1.18 of the Solana Beach Municipal Code, which govern administrative citations and penalties.¹⁸

Solana Beach Ordinance 523 remains significant in the broader effort to reduce coastal waste through its citywide coverage and technical clarity. Regulating balloons based on their functional characteristic, as “lighter-than-air gas,” the ordinance effectively targets the mechanism by which balloons escape and cause environmental harm. Ordinance 523 has offered an accessible framework for other coastal cities to adopt similar regulations, like that of Laguna Beach Ordinance 1683.

Laguna Beach Ordinance 1683 was adopted by the City Council on February 21, 2023, and became effective in January 2024.¹⁹ While the ordinance similarly targets balloon-related environmental impacts, its regulatory structure differs from Ordinance 523 in a number of key aspects. Most notably, Laguna Beach adopts a broader categorical ban on balloons regardless of inflation method, encompassing both latex and foil.²⁰

The ordinance also differs in its treatment of commercial activity. Sales and distribution restrictions apply to businesses physically located within Laguna Beach, while vendors operating outside city limits are not subject to the ordinance's sales provisions.²¹ This contrasts with Solana Beach's more expansive application, which does not distinguish between in-city and out-of-city sellers. Additionally, Laguna Beach explicitly exempts balloons used for medical, industrial, or scientific purposes, further narrowing the ordinance's scope relative to Solana Beach's more uniform prohibition.²²

Workers in the balloon and party supply industries expressed concerns that the ordinance could harm the local economy. They proposed alternative solutions, such as educating customers on properly weighing down balloons or banning portable helium tanks on beaches, rather than implementing a full prohibition.²³

Unlike Solana Beach's citywide ban, Laguna Beach Ordinance 1683 explicitly states an exemption for private events held on private property.²⁴ This exemption reflects an approach that prioritizes restrictions in public and city-controlled spaces while preserving limited private use. The ordinance places particular emphasis on regulating balloon use in public rights of way, including "any public street, alley, sidewalk, right-of-way, park, parking lot, parkway, beach, and City-sponsored events,"²⁵ reinforcing its focus on minimizing debris in highly trafficked public areas.

The ordinance's effectiveness is constrained by this exemption. Balloons are most frequently used at weddings, birthday parties, and other private celebrations, many of which take place outdoors, where accidental release and subsequent littering are common. In California's coastal communities, balloons released inland or on private property can be readily transported by wind or waterways into marine ecosystems.

By excluding private property from regulation, the ordinance does not fully address one of the most common pathways through which balloon debris can enter the environment. While the ordinance establishes meaningful restrictions in public and City-sponsored spaces, its exemption for private events may limit the extent to which it can reduce overall balloon-related pollution. Consequently, the ordinance's environmental impact is likely to be limited and more symbolic, particularly when compared to regulatory approaches that apply uniformly across both public and private contexts.

Taken together, Laguna Beach Ordinance 1683 reflects a model that balances environmental protection with selective exemptions based on location, purpose, and commercial jurisdiction. In comparison to Solana Beach

Ordinance 523, which emphasizes technical precision and comprehensive citywide coverage, Laguna Beach's ordinance adopts a more targeted approach focused on public spaces and locally based commercial activity.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of Solana Beach Ordinance 523 and Laguna Beach Ordinance No. 1683, the core policy gap is not the absence of regulations, but the limited effectiveness of localized prohibitions without accompanying education. While both ordinances represent meaningful efforts to reduce marine debris by restricting the sale, distribution, and use of balloons within municipal boundaries, their impact is inherently constrained by jurisdictional limits. Residents and visitors may easily purchase balloons outside city limits or through online platforms and subsequently use or release them within coastal communities. As of December 2025, approximately 25%²⁶ of balloon sales within the U.S. market occur through online platforms, demonstrating that a substantial share of balloon consumption bypasses local retail regulations and municipal enforcement mechanisms. As a result, balloon-related pollution persists despite local bans, highlighting the need for a more structural policy implementation through education and advocacy.

Therefore, one useful first step is to require environmental warning labels on balloon packaging and at points of sale, particularly in coastal jurisdictions. These labels should clearly communicate that balloons, regardless of material, pose documented risks to marine ecosystems and wildlife if released or improperly discarded. While the Solana and Laguna Beach Ordinances restrict the sale and distribution of balloons, neither requires environmental warning labels or educational disclosures to consumers. As a result, individuals may comply with local sales restrictions while remaining unaware of the broader ecological consequences of balloon use, potentially leading them to still purchase balloons elsewhere. Although the California AB 847 mandates labeling requirements for Mylar balloons, these labels are primarily focused on electrical safety risks, such as contact with overhead power lines. Thus, AB 847 does not actually address the environmental or marine impacts of balloon debris, which does not adequately inform consumer behavior.

Environmental labeling would function as a preventative, low-cost measure that complements both local ordinances and AB 847. By increasing awareness at the point of decision-making, environmental warning labels can reduce accidental releases, discourage use at outdoor events, and reinforce broader waste-reduction goals.

Another gap in the policies is that the local ordinances primarily target retail sales and public use, overlooking a key driver of balloon consumption: professional event planners, including wedding planners, party planners, and corporate event organizers. These actors frequently purchase balloons in bulk for celebrations, and often source

products from outside municipal boundaries or through online wholesale suppliers. Despite their significant role in balloon usage, event planners and companies are not directly addressed in existing ordinances, particularly where private events or private property exemptions apply. This creates a structural gap in regulation, as policies fail to engage the actors most capable of influencing balloon use at scale. Unfortunately, this remains a stopgap until total balloon usage can be phased out.

Therefore, municipalities should expand balloon regulation strategies to explicitly include event planners and professional event vendors through compliance mechanisms. For instance, one way to achieve this is by integrating balloon restrictions into venue contracts, especially for city-owned or city-controlled properties. A second recommendation is requirements for event planners operating within coastal cities to comply with balloon-use guidelines, regardless of where products are purchased, to ensure that any balloon products are used properly, is also recommended. These two recommendations, paired together, can ensure that balloon use will be limited throughout the city, given strict compliance rules placed on event planners.

Beyond policy recommendations alone, there is a sustained need for comprehensive education and strategies that bridge the gap between policy and community engagement. Advocacy organizations play a critical intermediary role, connecting local communities with policymakers who possess the institutional capacity to enact change. By appealing to shared values and mobilizing collective action, these groups help translate community concerns into political movements.

The Surfrider Foundation, a prominent U.S.-based environmental nonprofit dedicated to the protection and preservation of the world's oceans, waves, and beaches, exemplifies this role.²⁷ Building on the momentum of a similar policy victory in neighboring Encinitas, Surfrider chapter activists initiated a targeted advocacy campaign in March 2022 through the organization's *Rise Above Plastics* committee. This effort included formally requesting that the City Council place a balloon ban ordinance on its annual priority work plan—a request that was subsequently approved. Through sustained volunteer engagement and collaboration with city officials and staff, the ordinance advanced efficiently, passing its second reading within two months. Following its adoption, Surfrider identified Solana Beach and Encinitas as model municipalities, using these successful ordinances to inform and encourage similar policy initiatives across San Diego County.²⁸

Moving forward, it remains an ongoing priority to identify and address points of disconnect between local communities and their willingness or capacity to advocate for ocean conservation-related issues. Intermediary bodies such as advocacy organizations provide a vital channel through which education can reach broader

audiences. Values-based approaches are effective because they resonate on an individual level. While laws and ordinances are necessary, their enforcement is inherently limited; meaningful, long-term change ultimately depends on shifting individual behaviors through sustained education and community engagement.

Case Study 2: Advocacy Campaigns in Virginia

This section will focus on how non-profit and social media awareness campaigns can successfully implement Mylar balloon legislation. Utilizing existing campaigns and subsequent regulations in Virginia, we will provide recommendations on how OCS and other non-profit awareness groups can directly lead to legislative change.

Outreach Campaigns

On the Eastern Seaboard, several successful campaigns have been launched over the last decade to improve legislation aimed at reducing mylar and non-biodegradable balloon pollution, including campaigns in Florida, New York, North Carolina, and other coastal states.²⁹ The most successful and extensive campaign to date was the Joyful Send-Off pilot campaign and the subsequent “Prevent Balloon Litter” campaign in Virginia, launched in 2017 and 2018, respectively. Using funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program partnered with Clean Virginia Waterways and numerous conservation non-profits to create the Joyful Send-Off campaign and raise awareness of balloon pollution. Underscored by pre-campaign and post-campaign research to analyze its effectiveness, Joyful Send-Off targeted a distinct balloon-using audience and utilized “Community-Based Social Marketing.” Their findings were redirected to Virginia lawmakers to make real policy changes regarding non-biodegradable balloon pollution in 2021.³⁰

In the years leading up to the social marketing campaign, the non-profit Clean Virginia Waterways (CVW) conducted extensive research on state shoreline debris pollution beginning in 2014, under the direction of the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (CZM). This research, as part of the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan, identified balloon debris as “one of the most harmful items to wildlife” and served as the basis to design and implement the “Joyful Send-Off” campaign.³¹ Once pollution research was conducted, CZM partnered with OpinionWorks, a for-profit market research platform, to identify social sentiments about balloon usage, as well as a target audience for the campaign. CZM and its partners used a proven and effective strategy called “Community-Based Social Marketing” (CBSM) to promote the campaign. This outreach technique, created by Dr. Doug McKenzie-Mohr, focuses on educating desired audiences through neighbor-to-neighbor contact and encourages sustainable behaviors to reduce balloon pollution. Dr. McKenzie-Mohr writes, “The cornerstone of sustainability is behavior change...to date, most initiatives to foster sustainable behavior have relied primarily upon large-scale information campaigns that utilize education and/or advertising to encourage the adoption of sustainable actions.”³²

The efforts made by the Joyful Send-Off campaign, though part of a larger state-wide effort to reduce balloon litter, have directly influenced Virginia's success in reducing balloon litter throughout the last decade. As a result of its success in Virginia, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) has applied the campaign's community-based social marketing efforts throughout the Mid-Atlantic region to New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland.³³ The findings, both within Virginia and the greater Mid-Atlantic region, proved that proper education and social outreach could prevent balloon litter and create tangible change.

This section of the Joyful Send-Off campaign case study will detail the influence and effects that Community-Based Social Marketing has had on the scale of balloon pollution in and around Virginia.

When evaluating the effectiveness of CVW and CZM efforts, it is important to note that the Joyful Send-Off campaign's CBSM strategy was not the only initiative aimed at reducing balloon litter. In fact, the grant from the NOAA to CVW and CZM was initially awarded to fund extensive research on the consequences and prevalence of balloon litter in Virginia, which later resulted in CBSM-related research through Joyful Send-Off and Prevent Balloon Litter.³⁴ The initial research conducted by CVW and CZM measuring balloon pollution in Virginia was also instrumental in assuring that this piece of legislation became state law.³⁵

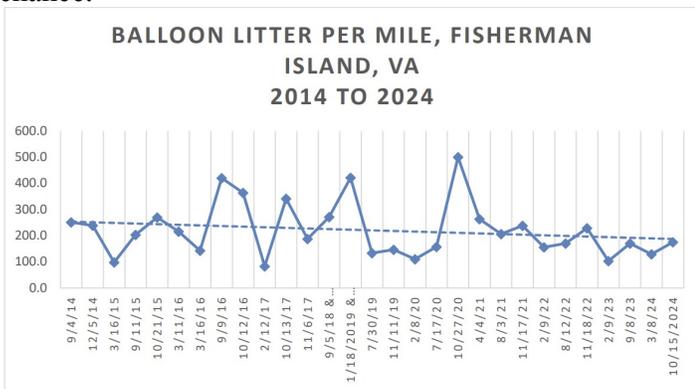
Given that CBSM was conducted in parallel to this research, the most significant change brought about in Virginia, statute § 29.1-556.1, banning balloon releases, cannot be solely attributed to the Joyful Send-Off campaign.³⁶ Despite this, CBSM-based campaigns, through the Joyful Send-Off and Prevent Balloon Litter educational campaigns, were crucial in fueling support for the legislation and creating the social conditions that made the law politically viable.

When Joyful Send-Off was officially launched in 2017, the campaign focused on four desired outcomes that would indicate a successful campaign and progress towards preventing balloon litter. These desired outcomes included receiving significant commitments from the public to switch away from balloon releases, measurable reductions in balloon releases, significant commitments to prevent the accidental release of balloons, and ultimately, a measurable reduction of balloon litter in Virginia.³⁷ Evidence from the years following the release of Joyful Send-Off shows that multiple of these desired outcomes were met, indicating that the campaign was successful.

House Bill 2159

Concerning quantifiable public commitments to switch away from the release of balloons, a petition supporting Virginia’s § 29.1-556.1 statute banning balloon releases and calling for Virginians to contact their representatives about the harmful effects of balloon releases shows that this desired outcome was met. The Change.org petition, started by Christina Trapani, one of the main orchestrators of the Joyful Send-Off campaign, received 7,841 signatures between its creation in 2019 and the passing of the ban in 2021.³⁸ Furthermore, as the petition urged supporters to reach out to their representatives, this quantifiable public support extended to the legislative process itself. Dozens of testimonies sent to the Virginia state legislature leading up to and during the hearing for the 2021 HB2159 reinforce the scale of the impact that the Joyful Send-Off campaign had on garnering support for the balloon release ban.³⁹ The vast majority of these testimonies cite the environmental harm that balloon litter causes, many of which specifically mention concerns for the well-being of marine life.⁴⁰ The support demonstrated for the 2021 HB-2159 through both of these mediums, and the fact that this support was based on education surrounding the harm balloons cause, shows that CBSM was successful in both educating the public and garnering support for balloon bans.

The main goal of the Joyful Send-Off campaign was to prevent balloon litter by educating the public and changing individuals’ behavior through CBSM. Though the direct reductions in balloon litter due to behavior change from the campaign are not quantifiable, a clear reduction in balloon litter following the enactment of Virginia § 29.1-556.1 has been measured. Research conducted by CVW and CZM found that the per-mile-average of balloon litter on the main island of study decreased from 240.6 to 174.9 after the law was implemented.⁴¹ Moreover, there was a small p-value of 0.03 associated with the decrease, indicating that the reduction in balloon litter was in fact not due to chance.⁴²



The significant quantifiable decrease in balloon litter following the implementation of the law, along with the positive social response to the campaigns, proves that the Joyful Send-Off and Prevent Balloon Litter campaigns were successful in achieving their desired outcomes through Community-Based Social Marketing.

Recommendations

While the scale of Joyful Send-Off involved significantly more actors than a single education or research organization, its results and strategies are a feasible target for the Ocean Conservation Society to achieve if they seek collaboration with local market research firms, conservation organizations, the private sector, and government initiatives or programs. Moreover, the approach of the Be Balloon Aware campaign can be reoriented to more closely align with the Joyful Send-Off campaign's strategies, thus allowing for more successful outreach and engagement from the campaign's audience.

Finding specific and accessible target audiences is one of the main steps that the Ocean Conservation Society Be Balloon Aware campaign could take in order to achieve success akin to that of the Joyful Send-Off campaign. Part of the reason that the Joyful Send-Off campaign proved to be so successful was that it spread the importance of reducing balloon litter by initially focusing on one audience group: consumers. Research conducted during the study indicated that fundraisers for charities, family celebrations, and weddings were all main sources of mass balloon releases.⁴⁴ While the Mid-Atlantic campaign aimed to reduce all kinds of balloon litter and increase education on the consequences of litter, this research led to the campaign's focus on celebrations, particularly weddings, as a source of balloon litter. While the Be Balloon Aware campaign does acknowledge celebrations as a main source of balloon pollution, the campaign's messaging is more generic than that of the Joyful Send-Off campaign. The Ocean Conservation Society Be Balloon Aware can hone its messaging and outreach to target a specific audience that contributes to balloon pollution. Since most balloon releases happen at various family gatherings, from funerals and memorials to weddings and birthdays, OCS can expand its messaging to specifically target these events in California.⁴⁵

To best reach a target audience, OCS can use several strategies in line with those of the Joyful Send-Off campaign. A possible avenue would be to work with a consumer research/consulting group that records data on consumer attitudes. Further, we recommend that OCS employ more targeted social media outreach and strategies that focus on high-volume balloon release sectors and customers.

To maintain and expand the successes of the OCS Be Balloon Aware campaign and to lead outreach campaigns towards real policy change, it is highly recommended to partner with regional or state alliances. The Joyful Send-Off

campaign proved that local and regional commitments ultimately bring attention to lawmakers and private firms, leading to outcomes similar to the aforementioned Virginia House Bill 2159. A next step to successfully targeting an audience on a local level would be to mimic the Joyful Send-Off campaign's transition to the Prevent Balloon Litter campaign and its partnership with the regional group MARCO. California hosts multiple regional alliances, but the most applicable and feasible organization appears to be the West Coast Ocean Alliance.⁴⁶ By seeking collaboration with the West Coast Ocean Alliance, OCS can bring an established local campaign to regional and state prominence, expanding its influence and effectiveness.

Research from the Virginia campaign also suggested that a good target audience for a CBSM-style campaign may be “companies that use balloons as part of their branding and marketing efforts, including restaurants, real estate companies, stores, and medical practices.”⁴⁷ Much like education proved to be successful in reducing balloon litter from weddings, private firms that use balloons may also be encouraged to find alternative practices. This approach could be particularly effective if these companies are informed that their consumers may see balloon usage as an environmentally insensitive choice. Regardless of the group, the Be Balloon Aware educational campaign may prove to be more effective if its messaging is directed towards specific audiences who may change their behaviors if introduced to the harm of balloon pollution.

The bottom line is that examples from waterway campaigns in Virginia show that even when a campaign does not directly initiate change, there is a high likelihood of indirect influences that lead to policy and behavioral changes, which have been shown to be more effective.

Conclusion

Overall, the persistence of the Mylar foil balloon pollution issue has evidently become a topic of discussion among policymakers and advocacy groups alike. However, despite its continued presence in local and statewide political discourse, a lack of a cohesive framework for change has appeared, thus demonstrating the need for a comprehensive case study comparison. By analyzing the regulations passed in California and outreach campaigns in Virginia, we provided recommendations for the Ocean Conservation Society on a working strategy to elicit political change and how those ordinances should be structured. We hope this report proves sufficient in achieving OCS's goal of a foundation to build both their Be Balloon Aware campaign upon, as well as any other campaign they embark upon in the future.

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