

Senate Judiciary Committee

Pete Mulvey 271-4063

HB 387, relative to balloons being released into the air.

Hearing Date: May 13, 2025

Time Opened: 1:31 p.m.

Time Closed: 1:46 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gannon, McConkey, Altschiller and Reardon

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Abbas

Bill Analysis: This bill prohibits the release of lighter-than-air balloons into the air and establishes penalties for violations of this prohibition.

Sponsors:

Rep. Wall

Who supports the bill: 33 individuals supported HB 387. Contact peter.mulvey@gc.nh.gov for further details.

Who opposes the bill: three individuals opposed HB 387. Contact peter.mulvey@gc.nh.gov for further details.

Who is neutral on the bill: N/A

Summary of testimony:

Representative Janet Wall

Strafford – District 11

- HB 387 dealt with the release of balloons, which had been requested by a constituent, and brought before the Senate previously.
- The bill failed in the senate given its lack of an educational component.
- Florida became the 12th state to implement similar legislation.
- HB 387 mandates that all balloons sold must be affixed with weight and a disclaimer to notify individuals of the legal and environmental harms to releasing balloons.
- A farmer in Strafford County had lost two cows to balloon ingestion.
- The fine in the bill is not as serious as other fines; \$250 for the first offense and \$500 for subsequent offenses.
- Other states' legislation did not contain educational components and were stricter than HB 387.
- Sen. Gannon asked if there was data on the impact of balloons.

- Rep. Wall said there was plenty of data online to detail the impact on wildlife via entanglement or ingestion and maintained that it was a pervasive problem.
- Sen. McConkey asked for clarity that a helium balloon must be affixed with a tag to identify the balloon for the purpose of enforcement.
 - Rep. Wall elaborated that a tag would indeed be necessary, but could be clipped or affixed some other way, and added that HB 387 was concerned with the release of many balloons, namely 20 or more.
 - Place of origin can be difficult to figure out. Balloons can travel five miles at a time. The tag can assist in identifying the point of sale and purchaser.
- Sen. McConkey asked if he'd be fined if his grandson released a single balloon.
 - Rep. Wall maintained that the bill concerned clusters of released balloons and added that the wording of the tag would be determined in rulemaking.
- Sen. Altschiller asked if the tag could be a clothes pin, and that a particular label wasn't prescribed. Sen. Altschiller speculated that the tag was not a tracking mechanism but a notification.
 - Rep. Wall maintained that tags would be used to identify, and that police would prosecute any cases. Rep. Wall added that the concern with clusters was just a starting point.
- Sen. Gannon asked if the police couldn't charge him if they only found 18 of his balloons.
 - Rep. Wall reiterated that the 20-balloon figure was just a start. Other states said just a singular balloon could result in a \$1000 fine. Rep. Wall did not find such strict standards easy to trace or enforce.

Representative Will Darby

Hillsborough – District 11

- Rep. Darby supported the bill.
- Rep. Darby is a hunter and outdoorsman.
- It is incredibly common to find mylar balloons in the woods – Rep. Darby discovered them 50% to 60% of the time while hunting or hiking.
- New Hampshire's tourism and outdoor resources would benefit from the bill.

PM

Date Hearing Report completed: May 16, 2025