

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 07-0272R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: President Rawlings-Blake, Councilmembers Young, Kraft, Welch, Clarke,
Reisinger, Middleton, Curran, D’Adamo, Conaway, Mitchell

Introduced and read first time: March 19, 2007

Assigned to: Education, Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Bureau of Vector Control**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting the Commissioner and the Director, Bureau of Vector Control of
4 the Baltimore City Health Department to report to the City Council on the operations of the
5 Bureau, the status of outreach and educational rat abatement programs, and the efficacy of
6 programs to control rat infestations throughout Baltimore City neighborhoods.

7 **Recitals**

8 A news report, in April 1994, quoted a Hopkins researcher as saying that there are probably
9 more rats than people in Maryland. In Baltimore alone, there were 3,600 rat complaints logged
10 in the previous year, an increase of more than 40% from 1991. A leading manufacturer of rodent
11 traps and baits ranked Baltimore 8th among cities in its sales of rodenticides.

12 By 1998, the Director of the City’s Rat Rubout programs reported that the problem persisted.
13 There were 50 to 100 complaints processed by program staff each day, an increase blamed on the
14 warm weather brought on by EL Nino. The number of complaints so overwhelmed workers to
15 the point that it took a Rubout Truck and 2 pest-control workers a month or more to respond to
16 them.

17 In February 2001, the City was making headway in the war against rats. Citizen complaints
18 about neighborhood rats had dropped to 50 a week – far below the 600 calls a week the Rat
19 Rubout program received, in 1998. This success was credited to an efficient sanitation
20 enforcement program that targeted the trash and debris that provided food and breeding grounds
21 for the rodents.

22 An early holiday present, in 2002, was the purchase of 33,000 trash cans – one for every 10
23 rats in the City said news reports – to be given to residents in 4 of the City’s poorer
24 neighborhoods, Oliver, Sandtown/Winchester, Washington Village, and central Park Heights
25 where the rodents infestation was the most severe. At that time, City officials credited the efforts
26 of the Rat Rubout crew for a reduction in the rat population from 700,000, in 1997, to 320,000
27 that year.

28 On April 25, 2005, the media reported that the warm temperature that week had revealed yet
29 another unpleasant aspect of jury duty in Baltimore City: the 105-year-old Clarence M. Mitchell

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 Jr. Courthouse smelled like dead rats, a situation the Health Commissioner at the time declared
2 was unpleasant but not a risk to health because rats posed few health risks, particularly when
3 they were decomposing. He went on to say that he was unaware of any other recent rat
4 infestations in City buildings, despite a rat population that he estimated to nearly equal the City's
5 human population of 636,251.

6 Since early 2004, responsibility for control of Baltimore's rat population has vested in the
7 Bureau of Vector Control (VC) in the Baltimore City Health Department. The VC provides
8 rodent abatement services to residents by inspecting and treating sites reported to have rodent
9 infestation. Inspection and treatment is in response to complaint reports through the 311 system,
10 as well as strike teams that engage in neighborhood sweeps. The sweeps include prior meetings
11 with neighborhood residents and community leaders to identify and implement an inspection and
12 treatment strategy.

13 Past history shows that Baltimoreans have waged a long, intractable war against rodents. In
14 the interest of winning that war, it is essential that the Council receive regular battlefield status
15 reports from the VC agents on the front lines.

16 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
17 Commissioner and the Director, Bureau of Vector Control of the Baltimore City Health
18 Department are requested to report to the City Council on the operations of the Bureau, the status
19 of outreach and educational rat abatement programs, and the efficacy of programs to control rat
20 infestations throughout Baltimore City neighborhoods.

21 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
22 Commissioner and the Director, Bureau of Vector Control of the Baltimore City Health
23 Department, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.