

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 06-0217R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmember Conaway

At the request of: Gerietta Clay, Bernadette Clay, Sharon Clay, & Robert Clay, Jr., c/o Bill Goodin

Address: 6210 Northwood Drive, Baltimore, MD 21212

Telephone: 410-433-8123

Introduced and read first time: September 18, 2006

Assigned to: Public Safety Subcommittee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Police Department

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **A Request to the Baltimore Police Commissioner – Reopen the Investigation into the Death**
3 **of Robert Lee Clay, Founding Father of Minority Contractor Associations, Successful**
4 **Businessman, and Outspoken Political Activist**

5 FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore Police Commissioner to reopen the investigation
6 into the untimely death of Robert L. Clay to answer questions surrounding the manner of his
7 demise, to reassure the public of the political impartiality of the Police Department, and to
8 allow the family, friends, and admirers of Mr. Clay to take solace in the knowledge that,
9 finally, to him will come an eternal, restful peace.

10 **Recitals**

11 On August 16, 2006, fully 1 year and 3 months after his death, a prominent Baltimore
12 newspaper published in the Opinion section: “Robert Lee Clay cannot see the people shouting
13 for answers, nor can he hear the clamor of their voices. But supporters of the deceased
14 contractor and political activist are hoping their calls to reopen the investigation into his death
15 are loud enough to rouse even the dead. Or at least reach [City Hall].” According to press
16 reports, the NAACP joins prominent black local, state, and federal officials in requesting the
17 City to re-examine the Clay case, asserting that evidence suggests something other than the
18 official finding of suicide with which Baltimore officials closed the case.

19 Controversy has surrounded the death of Mr. Clay since he was found with fatal gunshot
20 wounds to the head in his Reservoir Hill business office on May 16, 2005. The first public
21 police reports would only confirm that the 58-year old contractor had been shot but would not
22 specify whether the death was a homicide or a suicide, but family members reported that police
23 had told them that suicide was not a consideration and that the death was being investigated as
24 “suspicious.” Further questions were raised when it was learned that Mr. Clay had received
25 several death threats in the days immediately proceeding his demise.

26 Mr. Clay was a controversial figure in life as well. The son of a backhoe operator, who
27 began his working life digging ditches, Robert Lee Clay rose to a position of influence through
28 his longtime leadership of the Maryland Minority Contractors Association and his behind-the-

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

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1 scenes role in local, state, and national politics. He parlayed his business savvy into an
2 successful entrepreneurship that won contracts for development of portions of the metro subway
3 system and the Fort McHenry Tunnel, and, in 2004, was appointed to the Governor’s
4 Commission on Minority Enterprise Reform. Overcoming personnel legal entanglements, he
5 emerged as a major influence in the political careers of many esteemed elected officials and as a
6 much admired civic leader.

7 Shocked and saddened by his sudden death, his friends, family, supporters, and admirers have
8 since held steadfast to the belief that because of his controversial life his controversial death has
9 not been thoroughly examined. Since the case was closed, those loyal to the memory of Robert
10 Lee Clay have clamored for a reinvestigation. On July 17, 2006, those voices united in a press
11 conference held at the entrance to Police Headquarters, delivering an impassioned cry for justice
12 and asking that those political figures that had benefitted from Mr. Clay’s largess support a
13 request to the Police Commissioner to re-open the case.

14 In the PETITION TO RE-OPEN THE MURDER CASE OF ROBERT LEE CLAY it states
15 “There is an insurmountable amount of evidence to suggest that Mr. Clay was murdered and that
16 it was not suicide as the Medical Examiner ruled. As a citizen of this City of Baltimore and this
17 State of Maryland, I am one of many who request that [the] City Council ask that this case be re-
18 opened.”

19 If the case was closed with a just conclusion, re-opening it to public scrutiny will not hurt any,
20 but will go far in soothing the anguish of the many who loved Mr. Robert Lee Clay.

21 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
22 Baltimore Police Commissioner is requested to reopen the investigation into the untimely death of
23 Robert L. Clay to answer questions surrounding the manner of his demise, to reassure the public
24 of the political impartiality of the Police Department, and to allow the family, friends, and
25 admirers of Mr. Clay to take solace in the knowledge that, finally, to him will come an eternal,
26 restful peace.

27 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
28 family of Robert Lee Clay, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and
29 House Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the Executive Director of the National
30 Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC), the Director of the Baltimore Office of the FBI,
31 the Executive Director of the Mayor’s Office of State Relations, and the Mayor’s Legislative
32 Liaison to the City Council.