

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 09-0105R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Young, Holton, Henry, Kraft, Middleton, Reisinger, Welch,  
Clarke, Branch, Conaway, President Rawlings-Blake

Introduced and read first time: January 26, 2009

Assigned to: Public Safety and Health Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Police Commissioner

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing- Baltimore Police Commissioner - Policy Change**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore Police Commissioner to brief the City Council on  
4 the change in policy that dictates that the names of police officers who kill or injure citizens  
5 will no longer be disclosed to the general public.

6 **Recitals**

7 Early January 2009, Baltimore police officials announced that the names of police officers  
8 who kill or injure citizens in the line of duty will no longer be released, changing a long-standing  
9 practice that law enforcement personnel reportedly believe puts officers at risk. Further, the new  
10 policy is in keeping with some other departments across the country and is designed to protect  
11 officers from retaliation, according to a departmental spokesman.

12 The new policy, while supported by the police union, was met with opposition by some  
13 elected officials and community activists as one that did not further a policy of transparent  
14 government, facilitate good police/community relations, support the public's right to know about  
15 possible problems with problem officers, or do anything to encourage communities to work with  
16 the police to solve crimes and overcome a "Stop-Snitching" culture.

17 The media reports that many Baltimore area law enforcement agencies report the names of  
18 officers involved in shootings – Anne Arundel County releases the information within 12 to 24  
19 hours; Baltimore County police release information at the discretion of the media relations  
20 office; the Maryland State Police and Harford County Sheriff's Office make decisions on a case  
21 by case basis; Prince George's County waits 24 hours after a shooting, then publishes the  
22 information on the Department's Web site.

23 Other large cities across the country have varying public disclosure policies ranging from  
24 situational evaluation, to full disclosure including the names of officers working undercover.  
25 However in May 2008, the California Attorney General issued an opinion that the public  
26 generally has a right to know the names of police officers involved in critical incidents, including  
27 those involving lethal force.

28 The opinion held that at the heart of the issue is balancing the public's right to keep watch  
29 over the men and women responsible for enforcing the law and the rights to privacy and security

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

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1 of the law enforcers themselves. The opinion recognizes that there are certain circumstances  
2 where the potential danger to the officer or to the crime fighting mission would outweigh the  
3 public’s right to know the officer’s identity.

4       Reportedly, Baltimore City Police shot 21 people in 2008, 13 of them fatally; 31 people were  
5 shot in 2007 – 13 of them fatally; and 15 people were shot in 2006 – 5 of them fatally. If police  
6 seek to engage the public in a full disclosure policy to counter the “Stop Snitching” culture that  
7 pervades Baltimore’s neighborhoods, they might rethink a policy that does not allow full  
8 disclosure in return.

9       **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
10 Baltimore Police Commissioner is requested to brief the City Council on the change in policy  
11 that dictates that the names of police officers who kill or injure citizens will no longer be  
12 disclosed to the general public.

13       **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
14 Baltimore Police Commissioner, the President of the Baltimore Chapter of the NAACP, the  
15 groups listed in the Planning Department Director of Community Associations, and the Mayor’s  
16 Legislative Liaison to the City Council.