

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 05-0015R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Young, Harris, Mitchell, Branch, Kraft, President Dixon,  
Councilmembers Conaway, Holton, Welch, Clarke  
Introduced and read first time: February 14, 2005  
Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

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Committee Report: Favorable  
Adopted: September 19, 2005

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**A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING**

**Is the High Cost of Meeting Federal Mandates and Repairing Water Main Breaks  
Breaking the Budgets of Baltimore City Residents?**

FOR the purpose of requesting the Director of Public Works to address the Baltimore City Council and the citizens of Baltimore on the high cost of water bills; providing an itemization of charges; identifying ways of minimizing the impact of federal mandates and needed repairs to an antiquated system; and advising customers of when relief can be expected from the high cost of water and waste water services.

**Recitals**

In April 2005, the Board of Estimates reluctantly approved an increase in water and sewage rates of 27% over a 3-year period to pay for federal mandates to repair the City's damaged sewage system. The increase imposed by a consent decree is to pay for over \$900 million in a series of repairs and improvements to stop sewage spills and leakage from pipes, some over 100 years old, into the streams and tributaries that run into the Chesapeake Bay.

According to officials of the Department of Public Works, Baltimore joined a growing list of municipalities faced with an Environmental Consent Decree to address sanitary and combined sewage overflows. The measures mandated by the consent decree compliment the ongoing efforts of the City to maintain public and environmental health by addressing those issues and in upgrading the wastewater collection system.

The primary focus of Baltimore's Consent Decree is the elimination of sanitary sewage overflows (SSOs) and combined sewer overflows (CSOs), including the elimination of 50 overflow structures that currently discharge to storm drains or streams. The Consent Decree is also meant to address upgrades to the wastewater collection system.

In addition to increases as a result of the Consent Decree, the average homeowner has been impacted by a State increase in sewage fees of \$30 per year. According to published reports, it is expected that when the last of the scheduled increases takes effect in April 2006, the City's water and sewer rates will have jumped a combined total of about 110 % in less than 10 years. A

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

1 family of 4 living in the city that paid \$564 for water and sewer service last year will pay \$51  
2 more this year, another \$55 next year, and another \$60 by 2006 – these numbers do not include  
3 the \$30 added by the State’s so-called flush tax.

4 Baltimore homeowners have a right to know exactly where their dollars are going. When  
5 they are putting out this kind of outlay, they must be assured that it is going for the purpose  
6 intended and not “down the drain” for purposes unrelated to the Consent Decree. In addition, if  
7 there is any possible way to provide relief to those most severely impacted, the old and infirm,  
8 the City needs to identify those resources and deliver them to the population most in need.

9 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
10 Director of Public Works is requested to address the Baltimore City Council and the citizens of  
11 Baltimore on the high cost of water bills; provide an itemization of charges; identify ways of  
12 minimizing the impact of federal mandates and needed repairs to an antiquated system; and  
13 advise customers of when relief can be expected from the high cost of water and waste water  
14 services.

15 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
16 Director of Public Works, the Community Associations listed in the Department of Planning  
17 Directory, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.