

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 09-0182R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Kraft, Henry, Middleton, Branch, Young, Spector, Clarke,  
Conaway, Curran, Holton, Reisinger  
At the request of: Matt Gonter, Patterson Park Neighborhood Association  
Address: P.O. Box 12293, Baltimore, MD 21281  
Introduced and adopted: December 10, 2009

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**A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING**

**Request for State Legislation - Split-Level Property Tax Rate**

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2 FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the 2010  
3 Maryland General Assembly and the Governor of Maryland to introduce and ensure passage  
4 of local legislation to enable the City of Baltimore to establish a split-level property tax rate  
5 wherein vacant, nonoccupiable or uninhabitable properties would be taxed at a higher rate  
6 than occupiable or habitable properties.

7       **WHEREAS**, Vacant properties have negative impact on the safety, value, and quality of life in  
8 surrounding neighborhoods; and

9       **WHEREAS**, A study in Austin, Texas found that “blocks with unsecured [vacant] buildings  
10 had 3.2 times as many drug calls to police, 1.8 times as many theft calls, and twice the number of  
11 violent calls” as blocks without vacant buildings (William Spelman, “Abandoned Buildings:  
12 Magnets for Crime?” Journal of Criminal Justice, 1993); and

13       **WHEREAS**, Researchers found that, in Philadelphia, “all else being equal, houses on blocks  
14 with abandonment sold for \$6,715 less than houses on blocks with no abandonment” (“Blight  
15 Free Philadelphia: A Public-Private Strategy to Create and Enhance Neighborhood Value,”  
16 Temple University Center for Public Policy and Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project, 2001);  
17 and

18       **WHEREAS**, Over 12,000 fires occur in vacant structures nationwide each year, causing \$73  
19 million in property damage (“New Tool Ready to Combat Arson: Vacant and Abandoned  
20 Buildings Targeted,” American Re, 2003); and

21       **WHEREAS**, Because vacant properties create a higher need for City services, including site  
22 cleanup and demolition, provision of legal services, police and fire protection, and legal  
23 enforcement, these properties contribute disproportionately to City expenses; and

24       **WHEREAS**, These properties generally have lower assessed values than occupied properties,  
25 and therefore, under the current tax structure, contribute less to the City’s property tax base than  
26 occupied properties; and

27       **WHEREAS**, The current tax structure provides a disincentive for owners of vacant properties  
28 to improve these properties.

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

**Council Bill 09-0182R**

1       **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the City  
2 Council of Baltimore requests the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the 2010  
3 Maryland General Assembly to introduce and ensure passage of local legislation to enable the  
4 City of Baltimore to establish a split-level property tax rate wherein vacant, nonoccupiable or  
5 uninhabitable properties would be taxed at a higher rate than occupiable or habitable properties.

6       **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Honorable Chair  
7 and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the 2010 Maryland General  
8 Assembly, the Mayor, the Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of State Relations, and the  
9 Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.