

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 07-0307R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Young, Reisinger, D’Adamo, Kraft, Harris, Conaway, Welch,  
Crider, Middleton, Mitchell, Clarke

Introduced and read first time: June 11, 2007

Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Public Works, Department of Finance

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Investigative Hearing – Department of Public Works Bureau of**  
3 **Water and Waste Water Utility Billing Division**

4 FOR the purpose of requesting the Director of Public Works, the Chief of the Bureau of Water  
5 and Waste Water Utility Billing Division, and the Director of the Treasury to report to the  
6 City Council on the number of complaints of incorrect billing or meter reading for water and  
7 sewer services provided to Baltimore City households, the number of homes that have been  
8 put up for tax sale as the result of debt accrued for unpaid water bills in the last fiscal year,  
9 and the general practices for billing of active accounts, suspended accounts, and  
10 disconnected water services.

11 **Recitals**

12 On March 26, 2007, a majority of the City Council joined with the sponsor in the  
13 reintroduction of the legislation that will preclude the City from foreclosing on residential  
14 properties solely to satisfy a lien imposed for charges owed for either or both water service  
15 charges or sewer service charges.

16 The introduction of the legislation was prompted, in part, by reports that over the past 3  
17 years, more than 400 city residents lost their homes to tax sales based on debts owed other than  
18 back property taxes. While some of these included unpaid charges for alley repaving and  
19 sidewalk repair, most stemmed from unpaid water and sewer bills.

20 Reports that homeowners’ property can be placed into lien sales for water bills of a  
21 comparatively little amount of \$100 give rise to the question of how many of the 7,699 liens sold  
22 to investors in this year’s tax sale were prompted by non-payment of such water bills or other  
23 small municipal liens.

24 While the public concern over water bills includes the number of bad reads, data furnished  
25 by the Bureau indicates a consistently high efficiency rate in meter readings. In Fiscal Year  
26 2005, of 1,618,379 bills mailed, there were 8,627 bad reads, resulting in an efficiency rating of  
27 99.5%; in Fiscal 2006, of 1,641,333 bills mailed, there were 6,114 bad reads and an efficiency  
28 rating of 99.6%; and in Fiscal 2007, of 1,352,630 bills mailed, there were 3,854 bad reads and an  
29 efficiency rating of 99.7%.

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

**Council Bill 07-0307R**

1 Water is a necessity, not a luxury. It is the responsibility of City government to deliver water  
2 and waste water services to City residents in the most reliable and cost efficient manner possible  
3 and the responsibility of City residents to pay fairly and equitably for the delivery of water  
4 services. A comprehensive look at the workings of the Bureau will go far toward achieving  
5 these mutually beneficial ends.

6 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
7 Director of Public Works, the Chief of the Bureau of Water and Waste Water Utility Billing  
8 Division, and the Director of the Treasury are requested to report to the City Council on the  
9 number of complaints of incorrect billing or meter reading for water and sewer services provided  
10 to Baltimore City households, the number of homes that have been put up for tax sale as the  
11 result of debt accrued for unpaid water bills in the last fiscal year, and the general practices for  
12 billing of active accounts, suspended accounts, and disconnected water services.

13 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
14 Director of Public Works, the Chief of the Bureau of Water and Waste Water Utility Billing, the  
15 Director of the Treasury, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.