



## Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY\*

CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL R  
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Conaway

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning  
**Informational Hearing - BGE - Service to Low Income Customers**

FOR the purpose of requesting the Senior Vice President of Customer Relations and Account Services for BGE to report to the City Council on efforts to help customers manage energy costs, the programs offered to customers to assist them in paying for energy, and the effectiveness of existing programs in preventing the termination of energy services to lower-income customers.

Recitals

January 2009, Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) announced actions that their customers could take to reduce the amount of natural gas and electricity consumption brought on by this winter's colder temperatures. Customers were reminded that even if the thermostat is set at a fixed temperature and never changed, energy usage will increase just to maintain the set temperature. If the weather gets colder, the longer the heating system has to work to maintain the temperature setting.

In addition, BGE reminded customers that to keep bills lower, they should take such actions as turning down the thermostat, decreasing hot water usage, using foil tape to close loose seals and gaps in the heating system, and keeping blinds and curtains open during the day and closed at night. In doing its part to help consumers manage energy costs, BGE has instituted budget billing that spreads the annual bill into 12 even monthly payments, a price markdown for using CFLs (compact florescent bulbs that last up to 10 times longer and use 75% less energy), rebates on Energy Star appliances, and the Peak Rewards and Smart Energy Savers Programs.

As of October, 2008, about 10% of the 1.1 million residential customers were more than 30 days delinquent in paying their bills. And although that percentage was around the same as the previous year, the average outstanding balance was \$700 compared to \$500 the year before. BGE officials report that by November 2008, 34,000 customers had their utility service cut off, compared with 23,000 customers in all of 2007.

BGE is the largest gas and electric utility in Maryland, delivering power to more than 1.2 million electric customers and to more than 640,000 natural gas customers in Central Maryland. Of that number, 270,200 electric customers and 220,400 gas customers live in Baltimore City.

While technically not a monopoly, the energy giant has the lion's share of the State's energy business. As an integral part of Baltimore's community, it is imperative that BGE work with local government, nonprofits, and other stake holders to make sure that none of our friends, family, or neighbors feel the bitter bite of winter's cold this or any other season. To that end, BGE is requested to develop a re-pay/pre-pay plan whereby the consumer who has lost service could pre-pay for service if they pay a percentage of the past-due bill. The purchase of a \$150 pre-pay card would allow service to be restored, while paying \$50 toward decreasing the past-due balance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Senior Vice President of Customer Relations and Account Services for BGE is requested to report to the City Council on efforts to help customers manage energy costs, the programs offered to customers to assist them in paying for energy, and the effectiveness of existing programs in preventing the termination of energy services to lower-income customers.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2009 Maryland General Assembly, the Senior Vice President of Customer Relations and Account Services for BGE, the Baltimore Health Commissioner, the Director of the Department on Aging, the Director of the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the Director of the Baltimore Fuel Fund, the Director of the Baltimore Salvation Army, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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