



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Holton

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Investigative Hearing - Kenneth N. Harris, Sr. - Seeking Justice for a Fallen Comrade and All Baltimore City Victims of Homicide

FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore Police Commissioner to report to the City Council on the status of the investigation into the death of former Councilmember, the Honorable Kenneth N. Harris, Sr., the number of other unsolved murders currently being investigated by the Police Department, efforts of police personnel to keep the families of murder victims informed of the status of ongoing investigations, the reported decrease in the rate of solved murders in Baltimore City, and efforts to improve the cooperation of community residents in contributing witness information for investigations into the murders of our family, friends, and neighbors.

Recitals

The October 20th news conference, which announced the results of the Baltimore Neighborhood DrillDown study that will be instrumental in attracting developers to revitalize neighborhood centers, was held at Northwood Plaza. The event was held at the very place Ken Harris, a respected and beloved colleague, was gunned down in the early hours of September 20th, 2008, exactly one month before.

Res. 08-04 - In Tribute to the Honorable Kenneth N. Harris, Sr. - A Distinguished Son of Baltimore City Gone Far Too Soon -, adopted by the Council on September 29, 2008, stated in part: "Ironically, in his more than 8 years of service on the City Council, one of Ken's main legislative quests was making this City a safer place, to protect all the citizens, particularly those of the North and Northeast Baltimore neighborhoods he represented, from the kind of senseless violence that took his life."

Mrs. Harris has said, and all of his friends know it to be so, that "if the shooting had happened to one of his friends, Ken Harris would have been outraged." Ken's former colleagues in the City Council, those who worked beside him in service to Baltimore City, and the citizens for whom he was a steadfast and dedicated advocate, share the family's outrage that death has come so unfairly to a person of such high caliber and join them in the vow not to rest until the cowards who robbed him of life are brought to justice!

The fact that our esteemed colleague's murder remains unsolved more than a month after his tragic death brings to

light a troubling trend within law enforcement. Media reports indicate that despite a sharp decline in homicides this year, Baltimore police are solving murders at the second-lowest rate in 28 years - leaving hundreds of homicides unresolved. If the cases remain unresolved for a long enough period of time, they will be moved from active investigation by the Department's homicide unit to the caseload of the unit's cold case squad.

Until the mid-1990s, Baltimore's outstanding homicide unit performed above average. At this time, however, Baltimore's solved case rate is about 10 percentage points below the national average for cities of similar demographics - a situation officials attribute partly to the loss of veteran talent around that time accompanied by the growth of a pervasive atmosphere of distrust between potential witnesses and law enforcement. In Baltimore, this state of affairs came to a head in 2005, with the release of the underground "Stop Snitching" video, in which drug dealers left no question as to what would-be witnesses could expect in return for their cooperation with police.

Introductory remarks by the Attorney General to Eyewitness Evidence: A Guide for Law Enforcement, a research report by the U.S. Department of Justice, hold that: "Eyewitnesses frequently play a vital role in uncovering the truth about a crime. The evidence they provide can be critical in identifying, charging, and ultimately convicting suspected criminals."

As we in Baltimore demand of the Police that they do a better job in solving the murders of our loved ones, we as citizens must do our part in coming forward to assist them in that effort.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Baltimore Police Commissioner is requested to report to the City Council on the status of the investigation into the death of former Councilmember, the Honorable Kenneth N. Harris, Sr., the number of other unsolved murders currently being investigated by the Police Department, efforts of police personnel to keep the families of murder victims informed of the status of ongoing investigations, the reported decrease in the rate of solved murders in Baltimore City, and efforts to improve the cooperation of community residents in contributing witness information for investigations into the murders of our family, friends, and neighbors.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the family of Kenneth N. Harris, Sr., and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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