



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: President Young

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
In Support of DPW's Water Management Authority

FOR the purpose of supporting the continued management of the region's water system by the Department of Public Works; and urging DPW to further strengthen its existing communications mechanisms and ties with neighboring jurisdictions in order to ensure the smooth creation and implementation of infrastructure improvement plans.

Recitals

Baltimore City has owned and operated its own water system since 1854. For nearly 90 years the City's Department of Public Works has also been responsible for the supply of drinking water to the greater Baltimore Metropolitan Area beyond the City's borders. Today, DPW's Bureau of Water & Wastewater's 1,700 employees ensure that high quality drinking water is supplied to 1.8 million people throughout the region.

Many of the 3,400 miles of water mains operated by DPW are nearly 100 years old. Pipes that old have generally far exceeded their designed life expectancy and they have therefore begun to fail in increasing numbers. The resulting disruptions to water supplies in the City and beyond have made it apparent to all parties that the region's water infrastructure requires a systematic upgrade.

Acknowledging this fact, DPW has developed - and begun to implement - short, medium, and long term plans to modernize the region's water distribution system. These plans have been developed in consultation with all of the system's stakeholders, including those outside the City. In accordance with DPW's plans for comprehensive improvements to the regional water system, the City has budgeted nearly \$500 million over the next 5 years to rebuild and improve the system.

Despite DPW's admirable and able management of the regional water system, there have been election year calls in some outside circles to reduce or eliminate DPW's authority to operate Baltimore's water system through the creation of a regional authority. This Council can not support these proposals. The City's management of the water system builds on a century and a half of tradition and experience while consistently delivering high quality water to all of its users at reasonable rates. It's employees have a full understanding of every part of the existing system and know both where changes need to be made and where likely failure points are located. In contrast, none of the

surrounding jurisdictions have any comparable history of, or expertise in, water system management.

A great deal of coordination and conversation with the counties is included in the current system; and the counties are responsible for deciding on their own priorities regarding capital construction. As the aging infrastructure essential to Baltimore's water supply is systematically updated, these ties to the surrounding jurisdictions will have to be used and strengthened to ensure that capital improvements continue to be coordinated and planned comprehensively.

However, the middle of a multi-year infrastructure improvement effort costing hundreds of millions of dollars is not the appropriate time to change a management system that works well in order to provide on the job training to officials unfamiliar with water distribution. Diverting energy, time, and resources away from actually addressing infrastructure deterioration and towards the creation of a new level of bureaucracy staffed by inexperienced political appointees would likely prove counterproductive.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Council supports the continued management of the region's water system by the Department of Public Works and urges DPW to further strengthen its existing communications mechanisms and ties with neighboring jurisdictions in order to ensure the smooth creation and implementation of infrastructure improvement plans.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of Public Works, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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