

2018 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 205

BY REPRESENTATIVE JIMMY HARRIS

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board to review its current billing policies and procedures for sewerage, water, and drainage services and to take all necessary steps to establish new policies and procedures that provide for a more efficient and accurate billing system.

WHEREAS, Act No. 6 of the 1899 Extraordinary Session of the Louisiana Legislature created the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board to furnish, construct, operate, and maintain a water treatment and distribution system and a sanitary sewerage system for the city of New Orleans; and

WHEREAS, in 1903, the Drainage Commission of the city of New Orleans was merged with the Sewerage and Water Board in order to consolidate drainage, water, and sewerage programs under one agency for more efficient operations; and

WHEREAS, over the last one hundred fifteen years the Sewerage and Water Board has funded sewerage, water, and drainage services primarily through local property taxes and user fees; and

WHEREAS, throughout the years, as costs associated with providing adequate sewerage, water, and drainage services to the city's residents has continued to escalate, the Sewerage and Water Board has continued to increase user fees; and

WHEREAS, although the city's residents understand the need to increase user fees to generate sufficient revenue for necessary infrastructure improvements, many recently began to question the billing policies and procedures of the Sewerage and Water Board as they were repeatedly receiving erroneous water bills; and

WHEREAS, on May 8, 2018, the Sewerage and Water Board announced its plan to implement a new billing system to address customer complaints about high water bills; and

WHEREAS, after the implementation of the new billing system the city's residents have found more errors in their water bills, and the staff of the Sewerage and Water Board has been slow to respond to their complaints; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that the Sewerage and Water Board establish new billing policies and procedures for sewerage, water, and drainage services to provide for a more efficient and accurate billing system, and such policies and procedures should include rules authorizing the adjusting, releasing, or extinguishing of any indebtedness from a customer's sewerage and water bill as provided in R.S. 33:4071(F); and

WHEREAS, the new billing policies and procedures should also address the following: discounts for elderly, disabled, and low-income customers; eliminate arbitrary estimate billing; improving customer service, public outreach, and overall communication, including holding community meetings and written notification of rate increases at least ninety days prior to an increase; and

WHEREAS, the Sewerage and Water Board should provide a written report on the status of billing policies and procedures to the House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs on a quarterly basis.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board to review its current billing policies and procedures for sewerage, water, and drainage services and to take all necessary steps to establish new policies and procedures that provide for a more efficient and accurate billing system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the executive director of the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES