

Dear 14th District Leaders and Friends,

Yesterday, May 10, the Judiciary & Legislative Investigations Committee, chaired by Councilman Jim Kraft, unanimously approved City Council Bill 11-0685 WATER – REQUIRED METER READINGS, which I sponsored, requiring that:

“No water bill based on an estimated rather than actual reading [may be] sent to any residential consumer.”

By committee amendment, only accessible water meters are covered by this requirement, meaning meters “accessible” to meter readers. (For example, this requirement does not apply to the 17,000 meters out of 400,000 residential water meters which are inaccessibly located INSIDE residential properties.)

Background

Many of you have contacted us in recent months about unreasonably high quarterly water bills, expressing frustration at trying to reach customer service and at failing to get errors corrected.

In working to resolve complaints, we have attributed many inaccurate billings to *estimated billing*. In many properties with problem water bills, water meters had not actually been read in the previous two quarters, and bills were based on estimates.

With so many billing errors occurring, customer service was swamped with calls and therefore difficult to get through to. And even after contact and promises of correction, many customers continued to receive the same erroneous bills.

Along with working to resolve individual billing errors, I introduced this legislation to address systemic problems, including the failure to read meters every quarter. Yesterday’s hearing and discussion on Bill 11-0685, and its committee approval, have led-up to the OVERHAUL of water meter reading and billing systems announced yesterday afternoon by Public Works. (Please see below.) Our thanks to Public Works, its Water Bureau and Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake for such a positive response to such urgent consumer and City Council concerns. Special thanks to Ms. Cindy Leahy of my office for documenting the systemic problems in support of our constituents and Bill 11-0685.

Thanks. *Mary Pat*