



DeKalb County Government

Manuel J. Maloof Center
1300 Commerce Drive
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Agenda Item

File #: 2025-1525

Substitute

2/10/2026

File Status:

Public Hearing: YES NO

Department: Board of Commissioners - District 6

SUBJECT:

Commission District(s): All Commission Districts

A Resolution By The DeKalb County Board Of Commissioners Establishing A DeKalb County Water Customer Bill Of Rights.

Information Contact: Commissioner Edward C. "Ted" Terry

Phone Number: 404-371-4909

PURPOSE:

A Resolution By The DeKalb County Board Of Commissioners Establishing A DeKalb County Water Customer Bill Of Rights.

NEED/IMPACT:

On February 25, 2025, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners voted to approve a "10% Rate Increase No Earlier Than May 1 for the Year 2025, and Nine Additional Increases in the Amount of 10% Each , Which Shall Become Effective on Each January 1, Beginning January 1, 2026 Through and Including January 1, 2034" and a "Resolution of the Board of Commissioners of DeKalb County Supporting Policy Changes to Protect Seniors, Disabled Individuals, and Low-Income Residents Against Upcoming Water Rate Increases," confirming their commitment to fair, compassionate, and fiscally responsible water policies that prioritize dignity, public health, and economic stability. The DeKalb County Water Customer Bill of Rights clearly outlines what all DeKalb County water customers are entitled to under policies established by the Board of Commissioners and supported by the Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP) and the Office of Water Customer Advocate (OWCA).

FISCAL IMPACT:

Unknown at this time.

RECOMMENDATION:

To approve the resolution and authorize the Chief Executive Officer or her designee to execute all necessary documents...

**A RESOLUTION BY THE DEKALB COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
ESTABLISHING A DEKALB COUNTY WATER CUSTOMER BILL OF RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, on February 25, 2025, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners voted to approve a “10% Rate Increase No Earlier Than May 1 for the Year 2025, and Nine Additional Increases in the Amount of 10% Each , Which Shall Become Effective on Each January 1, Beginning January 1, 2026 Through and Including January 1, 2034;” and

WHEREAS, on February 25, 2025, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners voted to approve a “Resolution of the Board of Commissioners of DeKalb County Supporting Policy Changes to Protect Seniors, Disabled Individuals, and Low-Income Residents Against Upcoming Water Rate Increases,” confirming their commitment to fair, compassionate, and fiscally responsible water policies that prioritize dignity, public health, and economic stability; and

WHEREAS, on August 15, the first 10% water and sewer rate increase went into effect for DeKalb County customers with the second 10% increase projected to go into effect on January 1, 2026.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners establishes a DeKalb County Water Customer Bill of Rights in which all DeKalb County water customers are entitled to the following rights under policies established by the Board of Commissioners and supported by the Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP) and the Office of Water Customer Advocate (OWCA):

1. Fair & Accurate Billing

- The right to clear, timely, and accurate bills based on functioning meters and verified readings.
- The right to dispute charges and receive an independent review by the OWCA.
- The right to freedom from non-usage related or otherwise extraneous charges and fees.

2. Access to WRAP (Water Rate Assistance Program)

- The right to affordable water through income-based billing assistance.
- The right to participate in the WRAP’s means-tested amnesty and debt forgiveness options, with partial or full relief of past-due balances in exchange for consistent on-time payments.

3. Protection from Shutoffs

- The right to uninterrupted water service while WRAP eligibility is under review.
- The right to protections for households in distressed or blighted communities under special review.
- Enhanced protections for vulnerable populations, including households with seniors age 62 and up, families with children under the age of 18, residents with disabilities, and those experiencing temporary hardships.
- Forbid terminations of water service during extreme weather related events.
- The right to due process prior to disconnection, which clearly establishes a time frame for advanced notice of disconnection via official County communications. Official communications will include materials on relevant county affordability and repair programs, a clear deadline for disconnection, and a well documented log of all verbal and written contact with the customer.

4. Independent Customer Advocacy

- The right to independent representation through the Office of Water Customer Advocate (OWCA).
- The right to have systemic issues, billing disputes, and customer complaints reviewed and resolved by the OWCA.
- The OWCA must publish regular reports on findings, trends, and progress.
- The OWCA shall have access to records and information to help facilitate the gathering of information to investigate customer complaints, billing disputes, and other systemic issues.

5. Community Representation & Oversight

- The right to be represented by the Watershed Customer Service & Billing Advisory Group, a citizen-led oversight body.
- The Watershed Customer Service & Billing Advisory Group shall review OWCA reports, billing practices, and major watershed initiatives to ensure accountability.

6. Transparency & Accountability

- The right to clear public communication on billing policies, WRAP benefits, and customer protections.
- The right to accessible reporting on program outcomes, fiscal impacts, and ongoing improvements.

7. Equity & Compassion

- DeKalb County affirms that water is a human right.
- The right to fair, compassionate, and fiscally responsible water policies that prioritize dignity, public health, and economic stability.

ADOPTED this ___ day of _____, 2026.

CHAKIRA JOHNSON

Presiding Officer

Board of Commissioners

DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, this _____ day of _____, 2026.

LORRAINE COCHRAN JOHNSON

Chief Executive Officer

DeKalb County, Georgia

ATTEST:

BARBARA H. SANDERS-NORWOOD, CCC

Clerk to the Board of Commissioners and Chief Executive Officer

DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

TERRY G. PHILLIPS

Interim County Attorney

DeKalb County, Georgia