

2024 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 574

BY REPRESENTATIVE HILFERTY

SEWERAGE/N O WATER BD: Provides relative to the sewerage and water board of New Orleans

1 AN ACT

2 To enact R.S. 33:4159.3, relative to the city of New Orleans; to provide relative to the
3 sewerage and water board of New Orleans; to provide relative to disputed bills for
4 services provided by the board; and to provide for related matters.

5 Notice of intention to introduce this Act has been published
6 as provided by Article III, Section 13 of the Constitution of
7 Louisiana.

8 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

9 Section 1. R.S. 33:4159.3 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

10 §4159.3. Contract for bill reconciliation service

11 The city and the board, acting jointly, shall enter a contract with a law firm,
12 accounting firm, business consulting firm, or some combination thereof that has
13 experience in administration of customer billing practices and processes. The firm
14 selected shall assume responsibility for negotiating agreements with customers
15 whose bills for sewerage and water board services are in dispute. The contract shall
16 authorize the firm selected to exercise any authority of the city or the board that the
17 firm may need to settle and finalize all such disputes including reducing and
18 modifying amounts owed for services, structuring payment plans for amounts owed,
19 and waiving and reducing late charges, penalties, and accrued interest.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 574 Original

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Hilferty

Abstract: Authorizes the city of New Orleans and the city's sewerage and water board to enter into a contract with a firm to negotiate agreements with customers whose bills are in dispute.

Present law provides that the public water, sewerage, and drainage systems of the city of New Orleans shall be constructed, controlled, maintained, and operated by the sewerage and water board of New Orleans. Provides for the composition of the board and its powers and duties.

Proposed law retains present law.

Present law authorizes the board to adopt rules and procedures authorizing the adjusting, releasing, or extinguishing of any indebtedness from a customer's sewerage and water bill in the following cases:

- (1) Instances of error on the part of the district such as equipment failure or process failure, including instances in which the board generates inaccurate invoices.
- (2) Instances in which an employee of the board, or a person acting on behalf of the board, fails to properly read a customer's water meter regardless of whether the board has submitted an invoice to the customer for an amount owed during any such period or fails to submit an invoice to the customer for two or more consecutive months.
- (3) Instances of error not on the part of the customer due to unforeseen damage or an extreme weather-related event or mandatory evacuation, and in such instances, only to the extent the situation increased the customer's indebtedness.
- (4) Instances where the customer is disproportionately impoverished or needy and qualifies for an adjustment, release, or extinguishment pursuant to an established social welfare program of the district.

Proposed law retains present law.

Proposed law requires the city and the board to enter a contract with a law firm, accounting firm, business consulting firm, or some combination thereof that has experience in administration of customer billing practices and processes. Requires the firm to assume responsibility for negotiating agreements with customers whose bills for services are in dispute. Further requires that the contract authorize the firm to exercise any authority of the city or the board that the firm may need to settle and finalize all such disputes including reducing and modifying amounts owed for services.

(Adds R.S. 33:4159.3)