**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO CREATE THE TASK FORCE ON PUBLIC WATER UTILITY RATES IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, public water utilities play an indispensable role in satisfying the fundamental need of every person to have access to safe and clean water; and

Whereas, the government of South Carolina must ensure its citizens and businesses can access clean and safe water at a price that is equitable to all customers of public water utilities while providing financial stability for these utilities as they expend money to ensure their ability to meet public demand for safe and clean water as they also seek to provide a reasonable level of profits to their investors; and

Whereas, instances of dramatic increases in water utility rates have threatened public access to water and consequently generated legitimate concern about the methods employed for regulating increases in water utility rates; and

Whereas, in an effort to ensure the citizens of South Carolina continue to have access to water at a reasonable price while allowing public water utilities to successfully engage in business, a careful examination of the process used to regulate water utility rate increases must be undertaken with balanced input from the public water utility industry, consumers, the General Assembly, and other significantly interested parties. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) There is created the Task Force on Public Water Utility Rates in South Carolina to be composed of nine voting members comprised of the following:

(1) one member appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee;

(2) one member appointed by the Chairman of the House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee;

(3) two members from public water utilities in South Carolina appointed by the Governor, with each coming from a different utility;

(4) three members of the general public appointed by the Governor to represent consumers, with at least one coming from an urban area and one from a rural area;

(5) the Chairman of the Public Service Commission or his designee; and

(6) the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff or his designee.

(B) A vacancy on the task force must be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(C) Initial appointments to the task force must be made within thirty calendar days after the enactment of this joint resolution. The initial meeting of the task force must be convened by the appointee of the Chairman of the Senate Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee within fifteen calendar days after the appointment of all members.

(D) The task force shall elect a chairman from among its members.

(E) Members of the task force shall serve without mileage, per diem, and subsistence.

(F) The South Carolina Public Service Commission shall provide research, staffing assistance, and other information that is required to assist in the work of the task force.

(G) In fulfilling the charge contained in this section, the task force shall present a written report with recommendations on reforming the method of determining rate increases for public water utilities to the General Assembly by July 1, 2013, at which point the task force shall no longer exist unless otherwise authorized by the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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