

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Friday, January 24, 2014
11:15 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN DENNIS O'BRIEN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

RESOLUTION 130288 - Resolution authorizing the Committee on Public Safety to hold public hearings to investigate and review the impersonation of City utility workers in the commission of burglaries and other crimes against elderly victims and other Philadelphians.

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COUNCILMAN JONES: Good

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morning, everyone. We are going to

4

convene our hearing for the Committee of

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Public Safety. Joining me today are

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Councilman O'Brien, Councilman Squilla,

7

and Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell on the

8

Committee.

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Will the Clerk please read the

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resolution title.

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THE CLERK: Resolution No.

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130288, authorizing the Committee on

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Public Safety to hold public hearings to

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investigate and review the impersonation

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of City utility workers in the commission

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of burglaries and other crimes against

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elderly victims and other Philadelphians.

18

COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

19

I want everyone to imagine 20

20

years from now, because we have a

21

youthful audience here today, but imagine

22

you're sitting in your home, believing

23

you're safe. Imagine you're watching

24

your favorite TV show and then you hear

25

an authoritative knock on the door, and a

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2 well-dressed, polite individual says to
3 you, you know, We smelled gas or we
4 believe there's a leak in the water or
5 that your neighbor is having some
6 problems and we just need to get in to
7 check it out for you. And then maybe
8 even against your better judgment, you
9 allow them to come in, and then you find
10 that your trust has been misplaced and
11 that you've been betrayed and you are the
12 victim of a home invasion.

13 Well, as the weather gets cold,
14 and we experience one of our colder days
15 today, thousands and thousands of
16 citizens face this prospect every day. I
17 want you to know that the vast majority
18 of the instances, these are legitimate
19 inquiries, but some nefarious individuals
20 have found their way to find this new
21 entre to commit crimes against
22 particularly our most vulnerable.

23 Today what we hope to do is
24 recognize that we're in this together,
25 whether we're talking about utility

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2 companies or whether we're talking about
3 consumers, and it is incumbent upon us
4 also as elected officials to bring all of
5 these interests together and figure out
6 some commonsense approaches to not
7 necessarily always being able to prevent
8 it, but to at least prepare individuals
9 through education and also to put our
10 resources together to possibly even
11 identify legitimate workers that want
12 entre to homes.

13 So with that, what I'd like to
14 do is allow any of my -- I see we've been
15 joined by the Chair of the Public
16 Utilities and Transportation Committee,
17 Mr. Johnson, and Councilman Henon, who is
18 also a member and Vice Chair of the
19 Committee of Public Safety. Thank you
20 for coming.

21 Would any of my members like to
22 give a comment?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: I guess
25 that's no. And what we're going to do is

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2 see a brief video and then we'll invite
3 our first panel up to testify.

4 (Video played.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: I think we
6 have a second video; is that right?

7 (Video played.)

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: I don't know
9 if I would have had the same amount of
10 courage she had to defend herself in a
11 case like that, but the bottom line is
12 that citizens shouldn't have to. Again,
13 this is not a utility company problem.
14 This is not a problem that consumers
15 have. This is all of our problem and
16 concern. If we're not safe in our homes,
17 we're not safe anywhere.

18 So what we asked was one of the
19 victims to come in today to testify, but
20 obviously at the advice of her therapist,
21 she is not ready for that kind of
22 testimony, but what she did do was submit
23 a letter in writing, which we want to
24 have read into the testimony.

25 Will the Clerk please read the

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2 letter.

3 THE CLERK: This is a written
4 statement of the accounts that took place
5 on Thursday, January 16th, 2014 by Diane
6 Davies.

7 I was in the living room and
8 heard a knock at the door. I went to the
9 door and peeped out the window to look at
10 who was at the door. I saw two men
11 dressed in what looked like PWD uniform
12 workers and opened the door slightly. I
13 felt comfortable with opening the door
14 due to the water company being in the
15 neighborhood days prior. Therefore, I
16 felt that it was appropriate to answer
17 the door.

18 As I was beginning to address
19 the workers by asking how can I help you,
20 one of the men immediately punched me in
21 the face. By instinct, I grabbed a
22 baseball bat and protected myself by
23 hitting the man that hit me. The man was
24 startled and stepped back from the door.
25 I immediately closed the door to call

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2 9-1-1.

3 Attached is a list of
4 suggestions that I would like to present
5 to the City Council for review and
6 consideration. List of suggestions for
7 City Council for improvements within the
8 utility department:

9 One, prearrange appointments
10 with assigned workers to verify
11 appropriate people to residents' home.
12 Consumer is to have the name of the
13 assigned worker prior to coming out to
14 the home.

15 Two, having workers/supervisors
16 assigned to sections and areas of the
17 City to address consumers' needs, along
18 with appropriate official City of
19 Philadelphia or utility company
20 identification, along with notification
21 to consumer of the assigned worker and
22 supervisor scheduled to service the home.

23 And, three, begin the reverse
24 phone call program to ensure consumers
25 that assigned workers are coming to the

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2 home and/or area.

3 That concludes the testimony
4 submitted by Diane Davies.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
6 very much.

7 So what we want to try to do
8 today is make people aware that this is
9 an increasing trend that perpetrators
10 have opted to use, make people aware of
11 what they should do when utility workers
12 come to their home. In cases where they
13 find out they are impersonators, what
14 should they do then, and then commonsense
15 approaches, whether it's identifying ID
16 or a utility truck, but things that we
17 can do to put out there to get our
18 citizens aware. Then, finally, if we can
19 do reverse calls or if we can do 1-800
20 numbers or if we can use technology
21 through an app, we want to discuss those
22 things today, and if we can keep one more
23 citizen safe, it's worth doing.

24 So with that, can we call up
25 the first panel to testify.

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2 Again, do I have any comments
3 from our -- no.

4 THE CLERK: Francis Healy and
5 Denise James. Please state your name and
6 title.

7 (Witnesses approached witness
8 table.)

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
10 morning.

11 MR. HEALY: Good morning,
12 Councilman. Good morning, Chairman. My
13 name is Francis Healy. I'm Special
14 Advisor to Police Commissioner Ramsey for
15 the Philadelphia Police Department and
16 with me today, I brought our Director of
17 Strategic Communications, Denise James.
18 She's going to touch on some issues,
19 proactive issues, that the Police
20 Department has been moving forward with
21 with a lot of the utilities, and it's
22 pretty impressive work that she's been
23 doing. But I'll give you basically a
24 background of what the Police Department
25 does when it comes to elderly abuse -- or

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2 not elderly abuse per se, but targeting
3 elderly and who is responsible for
4 investigating.

5 So with that said, the
6 Philadelphia Department -- we have a unit
7 within the Special Victims Unit titled
8 the CARE Unit. The acronym CARE stands
9 for Crimes Against the Retired and
10 Elderly Unit, and it investigates
11 primarily frauds, flimflams, home
12 improvement scams, and abuse or neglect
13 complaints involving elderly victims.
14 There is -- regrettably, that's after the
15 fact, but what's most impressive about
16 the unit -- and, quite honestly,
17 Detective Nix, who is involved in it,
18 she's committed, impassioned under the
19 supervision of John Darby, Captain Darby,
20 and Deputy Commissioner Wright. They do
21 a lot of proactive work. She goes out to
22 a lot of the community groups, churches,
23 social agencies with the notion of
24 prevention and giving workshops. She
25 gives workshops to the elderly quite

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2 often.

3 In these workshops, the seniors
4 are given ideas of what to look for and
5 what to do if and when someone who
6 arrives at their home alleges they are a
7 utility worker. The seniors are also
8 shown some items such as radio scanners,
9 identification, hats, jackets, which were
10 once confiscated from utility imposters.
11 This is done to show the seniors what to
12 look for and to show them how easy it is
13 for someone to impersonate a utility
14 worker. The workshops and presentations
15 are done throughout the year and upon
16 request by any agency.

17 The seniors are also informed
18 or told that if they are not expecting a
19 utility worker, not to allow anyone in
20 their home, to tell the person at the
21 door that they will call the police first
22 to verify that they are a utility
23 employee. Most likely and our experience
24 has shown that once a senior tells such
25 individuals, especially imposters, they

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2 won't wait for the police. They will
3 flee. So the key is making the seniors
4 aware up front.

5 The seniors are also told to
6 take notice of what the persons are
7 wearing so that our responding officers
8 can actually arrest these individuals.
9 This is done to inform the officers
10 responding hopefully to catch the
11 individuals before they flee the area.

12 The CARE Unit also works
13 closely with the Corporation on Aging and
14 the Senior Law Center.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you pull
16 your mic a little closer, please.

17 MR. HEALY: I'm sorry. Our
18 CARE Unit also works with the
19 Philadelphia Corporation on Aging, the
20 Senior Law Center and sits on the PCA
21 Task Force, and the Task Force members
22 are also available to help speak to
23 seniors in a combined effort to inform
24 our seniors on crime prevention.

25 This concludes my official

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2 testimony. I'm here to answer any
3 questions, but what I'd really like to do
4 now, I'm kind of proud to introduce
5 Denise James to talk about what the great
6 effort she's been working with the Water
7 Department, the gas company, and PECO.

8 MS. JAMES: And the Corporation
9 for Aging.

10 MR. HEALY: With that, I'll --

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome,
12 Ms. James. I understand you're new.

13 MS. JAMES: Yes. After being
14 somewhere for 20-some years, anywhere you
15 are for a year or ten years or less, it
16 still feels new.

17 I appreciate you inviting us
18 here to speak on this, and hopefully what
19 you gather today helps us add another
20 layer of protection to some of our most
21 vulnerable citizens, senior citizens, who
22 have paved the way for us.

23 So we are actually beyond
24 incubating. We were incubating an idea
25 of how to uniformly approach trying to

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2 help seniors understand how to manage
3 when they think someone is at the door
4 claiming to be a utility person and they
5 don't -- they aren't sure. So we've
6 been -- when I say "we," talking about
7 the parties we mentioned, PECO, PGW, the
8 Water Department, and the Philadelphia
9 Corporation for Aging -- have been
10 discussing and actually moving forward
11 and creating a unified campaign that will
12 be citywide, even down to an identifiable
13 logo that helps remind senior citizens
14 that there are steps they can take to be
15 safe, and they pretty much align
16 themselves to what Captain was saying
17 just a few moments ago. And we don't
18 want to get ahead of ourselves and have
19 it be out there as a campaign and not yet
20 have all of the legs to stand on, but
21 it's essentially something called Be Sure
22 Before You Open the Door, because --

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Be Sure?

24 MS. JAMES: Be Sure Before You
25 Open the Door. Because the critical

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2 thing is for someone whose vision is
3 impaired perhaps or who's looking through
4 a peephole that doesn't really allow you
5 to see the logos or the insignia on a
6 truck from whatever utility is needing --
7 feeling like you need to open the door to
8 be sure. Instead, they need to not open
9 that door if they can't see what they
10 need to see or verify through that hole
11 or looking glass or whatever it is.

12 And so we're setting up this
13 system where there would be one number
14 that senior citizens could call if they
15 are unsure. And when they call that
16 number, a whole series of things will
17 kick in to, one, begin making them more
18 safe with police response and as well
19 reaching out to the specific utility to
20 try to determine if there should be
21 someone there. I don't really want to go
22 much further than that, because then it
23 gets out as something that we're not
24 prepared to unveil until the spring.

25 So we've been working on that

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2 for a little while and are really close
3 to the end result, one that we hope will
4 be impactful and perhaps protect some
5 seniors from not just getting hurt, but
6 one of these days I'm worried that a
7 senior is not going to live through this
8 kind of experience, and none of us want
9 to see that.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, I'm
11 encouraged by that and I'm glad that this
12 is something that is underway. Let me
13 ask a couple of questions.

14 Do you find this trend to be an
15 increasingly utilized tool by criminals?
16 Are impersonators on the rise? Have you
17 statistically monitored this or has there
18 been any effort to try to see if this is
19 a trend?

20 MR. HEALY: In preparation for
21 today's hearing, I tried to get some
22 concrete numbers, and it appears to be
23 rather static. It's consistent. It's
24 not necessarily on the rise versus on the
25 decrease, but it's consistent and -- it's

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2 a consistent chronic problem, but I don't
3 know if it's increasing per se. But it's
4 a chronic problem. We don't have -- I
5 think maybe under 20 or 30 jobs per se
6 are imposter related per year at best,
7 and that may be because some of them
8 aren't defined that way. A senior may
9 not report it as such. But from what I
10 found, that's approximately the number we
11 have, and it's been somewhat consistent
12 over the years.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is it
14 conceivable that sometimes it is a delay
15 in even knowing that they've been robbed?
16 If I found a pattern, based on news
17 accounts, what they do is, two people
18 come in. One takes you down the
19 basement, distracts you, the other
20 ransacks the house, and often you don't
21 make the correlation between somebody
22 took me down the basement, my jewelry --
23 I may not check my valuables daily. They
24 may take a delayed period of time before
25 you even know that you've been

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2 victimized. So I don't know if that's
3 happening, but it's a concern that I
4 think we all should have.

5 MR. HEALY: I can't say for
6 sure whether or not that's happening.
7 Obviously when there's a level of force
8 involved, it's readily apparent. If
9 they're going up and scooping a ring or a
10 couple pieces of jewelry off of a bedroom
11 dresser, quite honestly, it could be
12 weeks if the individual notices it, and
13 then even at that, they're not sure where
14 and when it left, because they honestly
15 believe the individuals who came into the
16 house were true workers. So it does
17 become problematic, especially when
18 individuals are suffering from some types
19 of disabilities, either visual or slow
20 dementia or Alzheimer's. Those type of
21 issues compound the problems even worse.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Second
23 question, have we apprehended any
24 individuals that have committed this type
25 of crime?

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2 MR. HEALY: I'm sure -- yes, we
3 have.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: So did we
5 learn from that apprehension? Is there a
6 way that they go about getting the
7 uniforms or is there a method which --

8 MR. HEALY: Regrettably -- what
9 Detective Nix does in some of her
10 workshops is, she brings some of the
11 confiscated stuff that they use. A lot
12 of it is quite simply a hard hat, a
13 radio, a reflective vest. And you can
14 pretty much -- these are older
15 individuals and they're very trusting
16 sometimes, and that's a shame. It's a
17 good thing for them, but nonetheless it's
18 a problem. They're preyed upon because
19 of that trust. And the problem is, a
20 hard hat and a radio and some people can
21 con their way into the door. So it's not
22 as if they're stealing PGW uniforms or
23 they're stealing PECO uniforms and
24 there's a conspiracy there. More so it's
25 just these individuals are kind of being

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2 just taken advantage of because of their
3 honesty and their just belief that these
4 people wouldn't do this type of crime.
5 And it's a shame. You don't need a whole
6 lot to convince people.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilman
8 Squilla.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chair.

11 My question is -- I know we
12 spoke about this sometime before. It
13 seems like they do prey on the seniors
14 and the older citizens, and we talked
15 about maybe coming up with some
16 mechanism, and maybe it's with a
17 combination with our state legislature,
18 about increasing the penalties for people
19 who attack senior citizens and go after
20 senior citizens. Is that something still
21 that we could look into and move forward
22 with in collaboration with our state
23 officials to do that?

24 MR. HEALY: I think anything
25 that you can think of is a good measure.

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2 I mean, I know when it comes to -- I'm
3 lost at words here. But they do have
4 penalty enhancements for different types
5 of crimes. There's no reason why this
6 couldn't be one of them as well.

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Will we
8 need to do that?

9 MR. HEALY: I'm sorry. I'm
10 thinking hate crimes. That's the word.
11 Penalty enhancements for hate crimes.
12 It's conceivable, you can sit down and
13 think about it. I mean, the whole issue
14 of home invasion, robberies in and of
15 themselves is something that the
16 Department and the City has been looking
17 at, because it is an issue, home
18 invasion, robberies, not necessarily
19 elderly individuals, is an issue. That's
20 a growing issue in the City that we're
21 trying to address in different ways and
22 in different formats. But looking at it
23 legislatively, it's never a bad idea.

24 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Is there a
25 recommendation that would come from, say,

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2 the police to us to say that maybe if we
3 work on a mandatory sentence, if we work
4 on something that we can work with our
5 state officials to do that where we could
6 then get your input and what you think
7 would work --

8 MR. HEALY: I would be happy
9 to -- I've done that many times before
10 and I do it through Director Mike
11 Resnick's office and through the Mayor's
12 Office. So I'd be happy to work with
13 Council and draft anything as long as the
14 Administration agrees with what I'm
15 sending you. They have to be a part of
16 it.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: We're used
18 to that.

19 MR. HEALY: But I'm just
20 saying, I do work for the Administration.
21 But nonetheless, I'm happy -- I think
22 we're all on the same page here. We're
23 looking to find alternate ways and
24 innovative ways to address this issue.
25 And it's an egregious crime. It's like

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2 targeting children and the elderly, just
3 things that are just beyond
4 comprehension. So whatever we can do to
5 help, we'd be on the forefront.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Chair,
7 would you be willing to request that or
8 to have something like that, maybe an
9 opportunity, a workshop with you guys
10 first. Talk to the Administration and
11 see what they think, and then maybe have
12 something given to the Chair that we can
13 then review and then maybe work with our
14 state legislators to see if something --

15 MR. HEALY: I'd be happy to
16 draft anything you want.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's an
18 excellent idea, and we will follow up
19 with that to sit down, come up with what
20 is reasonable and then work with our
21 colleagues at the state level -- and
22 we've had an increased communication with
23 them -- to come up with some codified
24 laws and enhancement --

25 MR. HEALY: I'd be happy to

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2 help draft anything.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
4 very much.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilman
6 Henon.

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chair.

9 I think this is a necessary
10 hearing to at least educate the citizens
11 of Philadelphia about the chronic issue,
12 as you said, and severe problem with
13 impersonating just to get into somebody's
14 house so they could be burglarized or
15 robbed and inflict harm. Maybe we can at
16 the end of this, we could figure out some
17 sort of collaborative effort with all the
18 agencies involved and do some major
19 public service announcements to educate
20 the public as a result and some of the
21 findings that we have here and
22 directions, next steps that possibly may
23 be taken as a result of this hearing. So
24 I want to thank the Chair for putting
25 this together.

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2 I just have a few questions.

3 Maybe you know or you don't know. So is
4 it by law impersonating an officer,
5 that's against the law?

6 MR. HEALY: A police officer?

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: A police
8 officer.

9 MR. HEALY: Yes.

10 COUNCILMAN HENON: Is a hate
11 crime tied to seniors as a class or as a
12 group of targeted --

13 MR. HEALY: Not to my
14 knowledge.

15 COUNCILMAN HENON: --
16 individuals?

17 I think Jersey, if I'm not
18 mistaken, a couple years ago had made an
19 effort, and I'm not sure if they were
20 successful or not, but they had -- they
21 really concentrated on tying senior
22 citizens and our seniors to hate crimes.
23 So maybe together as we all come
24 together, because we're all together
25 here, we figure out what the next steps

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2 are and tying impersonating a utility
3 worker or public official or somebody to
4 a hate crime when it's targeted to our
5 seniors I think would be a positive. I
6 mean, absolutely a positive. But maybe
7 that's the direction that we head into.

8 MR. HEALY: What I can do in
9 anticipation of this meeting, I'll do the
10 research from other jurisdictions and
11 research the laws, the state laws or any
12 local laws. The hate crime is a penalty
13 enhancement. So that's maybe something
14 even if it needs to be specific to
15 elderly, it's something -- I'll put
16 together a package and I'll see what the
17 local legislations around, especially
18 around Pennsylvania, have, but I'll also
19 look across the country to see if there's
20 anything else that we can basically steal
21 and use.

22 COUNCILMAN HENON: Absolutely,
23 and I appreciate that. That's going to
24 be extremely helpful. I think we have an
25 opportunity here to absolutely think

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2 outside the box and just go forward to
3 see if we can tie hate crimes to seniors
4 and impersonating utility workers or
5 whomever as a result of targeting seniors
6 in the City of Philadelphia. We're a
7 progressive city, so it's time to try to
8 think like that.

9 MR. HEALY: We agree
10 wholeheartedly, and I think when you see
11 the campaign that Director has put
12 together in combination with all the
13 other players, I think you're going to be
14 very impressed, because it's going to
15 leave a lasting message out there for the
16 seniors, and it's a very -- it's catchy.
17 And, like I said, we don't want to go too
18 much into it because all the legs aren't
19 there, but I think you're going to be
20 very impressed, because the key here is
21 being proactive, not reactive. We can
22 investigate. We can lock up people after
23 the fact, put them away, but the damage
24 is done.

25 COUNCILMAN HENON: Well, I'm

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2 glad to hear you're being proactive, just
3 like our Chair, who also is progressively
4 being proactive --

5 MR. HEALY: Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN HENON: -- and
7 trying to make this happen. Thanks for
8 coming.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good idea,
10 Councilman.

11 Councilman Johnson.

12 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
13 Mr. Chair.

14 I also want to just piggyback
15 on the two comments that were made
16 twofold and probably -- because I'm
17 taking care of my grandmother, you know,
18 this is resonating close to home. And
19 one of the individual homes who were
20 burglarized was a constituent on South
21 25th Street. Definitely the campaign as
22 you move forward -- I know you didn't
23 mention Comcast. You didn't mention
24 Verizon, PGW --

25 MS. JAMES: PGW is in there.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: PGW was
3 mentioned? So are all of the utility
4 companies going to be participating or
5 some opt out because they don't want to
6 participate?

7 MS. JAMES: In fact, we had a
8 call yesterday, and one of the things
9 we're going to do is reach out to
10 Comcast, but I didn't really want to put
11 Comcast on Front Street without having
12 done my due diligence in talking to the
13 right people there. But Verizon we have
14 not yet talked with or FiOS, but we'd
15 gladly talk to any groups that would want
16 to support this.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay. And
18 so definitely the awareness campaign is
19 definitely good, to encourage our seniors
20 to be more mindful and also their family
21 members, because when you're a caretaker,
22 you play a role in who comes in and out
23 of the house, and then if you're not
24 there, encouraging whoever you're taking
25 care of to be mindful to not open the

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2 door. I recognize now at this stage
3 being a caretaker, watching various
4 nursing individuals from various agencies
5 coming in and out of the home on a
6 regular basis.

7 From the penalty phase --
8 because I definitely want to do the
9 awareness, but I also want to make sure
10 that those who even think about
11 impersonating a utility worker to go into
12 someone's home know early on ahead of
13 time that these are the consequences of
14 you engaging in that type of act.
15 Because criminals think on different
16 levels. I may do this incident, but I
17 know if I do it with a handgun, this is
18 the time that's going to come with it
19 versus I just do a strong arm robbery, I
20 probably -- you understand.

21 MR. HEALY: Too well.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: It's the
23 criminal justice major part in me that
24 thinks how some individuals approach
25 things. But I know one suggestion is

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2 trying it to a hate crime, but also can we
3 take into account if we had state support
4 of this, just do a straight if you
5 impersonate a utility worker, this is the
6 penalty, even if it's not a hate crime.
7 Like specifically you impersonate a
8 utility -- because separate from the
9 Singers -- and that's why we're here
10 today -- the home invasion piece can just
11 start by me coming at your door acting
12 like I'm from such-and-such agency to get
13 into your home. How do we address it
14 from that aspect as well or can that be
15 something that can be explored I'm quite
16 sure?

17 MR. HEALY: Just from the work
18 I've done in the past, my preliminary
19 thought on the issue would be, one is
20 drafting the legislation twofold. The
21 penalty for actually committing the crime
22 against the elderly individual and
23 also -- and often time they are very
24 difficult to come testify. So
25 understanding that fact, that they may

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2 not be willing to come testify, so having
3 something on the books can be difficult.
4 It looks good on paper, but it may not
5 serve its true purpose. But often times
6 a police officer may come upon somebody
7 who is in PGW gear or who has stolen some
8 other stuff and is posing as an imposter.
9 I would probably, in a complete package,
10 in a perfect world, put together some
11 type of legislation just being that in
12 and of itself would be a crime. Now,
13 obviously it wouldn't be as serious a
14 crime, but if I see somebody walking
15 around the neighborhood and I grab them
16 and they're not who they say they are,
17 they're up to something, but I haven't
18 caught them doing a home invasion or I
19 haven't caught them, but nonetheless I
20 caught them in the attempt thereof, I
21 think when I draft some type of
22 legislation or proposed legislation, I
23 would incorporate that. So we have level
24 one and level two type violation, and
25 this way here just because the elderly

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2 person didn't call the police doesn't
3 mean that the responding officers can't
4 make an arrest.

5 So I'm trying to think outside
6 the box here now, so don't hold me to
7 anything, but I'll put together a
8 comprehensive package of what other
9 states have put together and then I'll
10 put together some proposals personally
11 and then I'll take any suggestions and
12 we'll model something and come together
13 with something nice.

14 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Councilman. That's good suggestions,
17 value added.

18 Councilman Squilla.

19 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And I
20 don't want it to say just utility worker,
21 because you see these guys come as window
22 washers. They knock on the window as a
23 window washer. They knock on the door as
24 a delivery man delivering flowers. I
25 mean, there's so many different things to

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2 do. So I don't know if we can just
3 pinpoint the specific operations. I
4 mean, we could work with our local
5 utilities and get a good grip of it, but
6 we still need to make this a wide enough
7 scope that we could encompass anybody.

8 MR. HEALY: I agree,
9 Councilman, but I think where the
10 egregious part of this comes from is that
11 the elderly people are unsuspecting.
12 I'll be honest with you, when you get
13 flowers delivered and you didn't get them
14 delivered, the old person, They're not
15 mine, I'm not paying for them. I mean,
16 they're very suspicious. But when you
17 have somebody in a uniform, they come
18 there, there's just like this instinctive
19 they're allowed to come in.

20 I grew up in an attitude in
21 Northeast Philadelphia where the gas man
22 would walk up and down the alley banging
23 on the back door, and we just opened the
24 door. I didn't know who it was. We just
25 opened the door, is what you did. And

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2 regrettably, some of our seniors and our
3 elderly grew up in that mindset. It's
4 trust that the person with the uniform is
5 the right person coming in. And I agree
6 there is issues with delivery men and
7 that kind of stuff, but I think it's more
8 egregious and I think the bigger problem
9 is when they come and pose as utility
10 workers where they have an expectation
11 that they're -- the elderly people have
12 an expectation that they're legitimate.
13 Whereas, I think honestly, some of our
14 elderly people are a little more
15 suspicious when a delivery comes and they
16 didn't order it. I'm just speaking my
17 own personal -- my grandmother, we had to
18 move her from her home and I'm dealing
19 with her issues as well now. That woman
20 would not let anybody in the house if she
21 didn't order it, because she just wasn't
22 going to pay for it. That was her big
23 issue. But nonetheless, but if you get
24 there in a uniform, she would have opened
25 that door without even thinking twice.

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2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: One of
4 the -- just quickly and we'll move on to
5 the next panel. I'm very encouraged
6 about the organized campaign, cooperative
7 campaign with the utility companies, and
8 I agree with you, the uniform aspect of
9 it constitutes a greater threat, because
10 we are trained to yield to uniform
11 authority. And so that constitutes a
12 greater threat.

13 The other thing is, we are
14 experiencing in Philadelphia an aging
15 population, and what we're beginning to
16 experience is naturally occurring
17 retirement communities. So the victim
18 pool is growing. And so as it grows, we
19 need to be a little more cautious.

20 I like the reverse call idea
21 where if they're going to be in the
22 neighborhood that day, that a robo call
23 goes out to the seniors alerting them
24 that this is going to happen, so to look
25 for them. Those are commonsense

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2 suggestions that can be rolled into a
3 campaign.

4 I also like the fact that my
5 colleagues are thinking in and outside of
6 the box by way of potential legislation
7 to enhance the penalties for this type of
8 crime.

9 So one other thing. How many
10 of these, in your experience, are inside
11 jobs, meaning that somebody came under
12 one pretense, observed from their
13 legitimate access that this person keeps
14 a lot of jewelry or a lot of cash, and
15 then sets this -- has there ever been
16 that two-pronged setup?

17 MR. HEALY: I can only speak
18 personally from what I've known and heard
19 of. The issue of having basically a
20 legitimate utility worker going in and
21 seeing things and then coming back --

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: No, not
23 utility worker, but maybe a home
24 healthcare person or someone delivering
25 something else, observing the target of

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2 opportunity and then setting it up. I
3 mean, in a couple of cases there was an
4 extreme amount of cash around and there
5 was jewelry that was taken, and it just
6 seems that coincidental, if you would,
7 that they would just hit potluck and find
8 individuals that had large sums of cash,
9 large sums of jewelry. I'm just
10 thinking --

11 MR. HEALY: I know of several
12 cases that I was involved in where, yes,
13 there was a person legitimately permitted
14 into the house and basically let other
15 people know what was in the house and
16 then the house was actually later
17 burglarized. It wasn't an imposter
18 situation, but the case I handled was a
19 granddaughter, a granddaughter that had
20 access to the house and she had a drug
21 problem at the time. So she notified, I
22 guess, her friends, and the friends
23 burglarized the house, her own
24 grandmother. So that was the only inside
25 type job that I was personally aware of,

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2 but I'm certain it does occur.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: I appreciate
4 that.

5 Are there any other questions
6 for this panel?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: What we
9 would like to do is, you move forward
10 with your campaign idea. We'd like you
11 to come back and brief us about the
12 rollout. And in particular all of our
13 districts are experiencing an increase in
14 senior status and we want to be able to
15 provide that information to them in a
16 prompt fashion. So we're encouraged. So
17 thank you for your testimony.

18 MR. HEALY: Thank you.

19 MS. JAMES: Certainly.

20 MR. HEALY: May I be excused?

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

22 The next panel to testify.

23 THE CLERK: Howard Neukrug,
24 Finbarr (Barry) O'Sullivan, and Mike
25 Melvin. Please approach the witness

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2 table and state your name and title.

3 (Witnesses approached witness
4 table.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: It's closing
6 in on afternoon, so I'm going to say good
7 afternoon.

8 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: Good
9 afternoon.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: As the other
11 people are preparing to testify, get
12 settled in, why don't you start,
13 Commissioner, and state your name for the
14 record.

15 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: Good
16 afternoon, Councilman. My name is Howard
17 Neukrug. I'm the Water Commissioner for
18 the City of Philadelphia. I'm very happy
19 to be here today.

20 I have some written testimony
21 that you all have. I'd like to just
22 start off, Councilman, you talked about
23 imagine yourself 20 years from now. I'd
24 like to just take the elderly and think
25 20 years back and what was going on in

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2 our city at that time, which was when we
3 didn't have any smart meters in homes.
4 So Gas Works, Water, PECO, we were all
5 knocking on your door every month, every
6 three months, however often we can get
7 there, and the message was let us in, we
8 need to read your meter. That no longer
9 exists. All the utilities now have these
10 smart meters and there's no reason for us
11 to be going into your house unless you
12 have invited us in because you have a
13 specific problem that you called us
14 about.

15 This is a very serious and I
16 like the term "chronic" issue that we
17 have here, and we're not just looking at
18 this from the perspective of the water
19 customer, but we're also looking at this
20 from the perspective of homeland security
21 and also utility impersonators for
22 facilities, water facilities, our water
23 supply. So it is a big problem, so thank
24 you for bringing us all together.

25 If a water utility worker comes

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2 to your house, it is typically in
3 response to a service request from you,
4 and in that very rare event where a Water
5 Department employee requires access to
6 your home, these visits are always
7 scheduled in advance. The Water
8 Department employee has a photo ID,
9 clothing that bears our logo, and they
10 will arrive in a City vehicle, which
11 bears our logo, has municipal plates and
12 a clear vehicle number. And, remember,
13 an unannounced visit from a Water
14 Department employee is a very rare event.

15 If you are ever uncomfortable,
16 we urge our customers to call 9-1-1.
17 9-1-1 and the Police Department will work
18 with the Water Department and identify
19 the persons that are there.

20 As was mentioned by Denise
21 James and the Police Department, we're
22 now coordinating our message,
23 Philadelphia Corporation of Aging, PECO,
24 PGW, Philadelphia Police Department,
25 spring 2014 campaign, Be Sure Before You

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2 Open the Door, and this is a common
3 message and brand. It's a very different
4 message and brand than what we had 20
5 years ago. It's going to be using
6 publications and bill suffers and PSA
7 announcements, flyers, and basically it
8 says encourage citizens to call 9-1-1 for
9 anything suspicious.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: We can take
12 everyone's testimony and then we'll open
13 it up for questions, if it's okay.

14 MR. O'SULLIVAN: Good morning,
15 Chairman Jones, members of the Committee.
16 Thank you for the opportunity to speak
17 before this committee on behalf of
18 Philadelphia Gas Works. My name is Barry
19 O'Sullivan. I'm the Director of
20 Corporate Communications at PGW.

21 I think like the members of
22 this committee, our friends from the
23 Police Department and our colleagues at
24 other local area utilities, PGW takes the
25 safety of the people of Philadelphia very

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2 seriously, and as the Director of
3 Corporate Communications at PGW, I work
4 with my colleagues to educate our
5 customers on the dangers of imposters and
6 other scam artists. That's why on a
7 regular basis in the last 12 months
8 alone, for instance, PGW has used its
9 social media channels to share
10 information about identifying genuine PGW
11 personnel. We talk with members of the
12 local media on numerous occasions about
13 the risks posed by imposters. We provide
14 members of the media with tips on how
15 people can avoid falling victim to those
16 criminals looking to take advantage of
17 what is a more vulnerable Philadelphia
18 population. We also include articles in
19 issues of our Good Gas News, which is a
20 publication included in every bill that
21 we send out to our half a million
22 customers around Philadelphia.

23 So the advice that we provide
24 and have been providing for a number of
25 years includes the following: If you're

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2 unsure of a person's identity, call
3 9-1-1. And obviously that's a common
4 thread through all the testimony so far.
5 The Philadelphia Police Department has a
6 direct line to PGW and can quickly verify
7 whether somebody is scheduled to be at
8 any given address, and that line is
9 staffed 24 hours a day. In all cases,
10 ask someone to show their ID before you
11 open the door. That obviously then
12 becomes a theme for the campaign that
13 we're developing. You should not allow
14 anybody into your home without proper
15 identification.

16 All Philadelphia Gas Works
17 badges clearly display the employee's
18 name, have a photo and have a badge
19 number. This is mine. With that info
20 you can call PGW at 215-235-1000 and then
21 we can quickly verify that the person is
22 who they say they are and that they are
23 where they say they should be.

24 In addition, all PGW vehicles
25 are white. Most have the PGW logos, and

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2 all have those dark blue municipal
3 license plates different from most other
4 vehicles. And in most situations, PGW
5 employees wear branded clothing. Here's
6 a T-shirt with a logo on it, and
7 depending on the season, they may wear
8 different types of clothing.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you hold
10 that up for the viewing audience.

11 MR. O'SULLIVAN: So you can see
12 this is just a T-shirt that one of our
13 employees might wear that has a logo on
14 it, as do our hats, as do our jackets, as
15 do our shirts. And in most situations,
16 PGW employees will wear branded clothing.
17 Together with the badge, the clothing,
18 the vehicles, these are all other ways
19 you can begin to assess some of the
20 validity behind their claims. And also
21 we remind people, it's not just letting
22 them into your home. Never give them
23 your phone number. Never give them your
24 account number. Never give them your
25 Social Security number. We already have

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2 that information. There's absolutely no
3 reason why we would ever need to ask you
4 for it again.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Could you
6 elaborate?

7 And I said I wasn't going to
8 ask questions, but please forgive me.

9 Can you elaborate as to why you
10 don't give that information.

11 MR. O'SULLIVAN: Yeah. It's a
12 question of identity theft. It's a
13 question of giving somebody information
14 that they can then turn around and use
15 either in a later attempt at a criminal
16 activity against you or to try and
17 perpetrate a crime of identity theft that
18 might give them access to valuables,
19 assets, money, accounts that you have
20 elsewhere. So really we just tell people
21 don't share that information with anybody
22 that comes to your door. If they're from
23 PGW, they're there for a reason. They
24 know who you are, they know who they're
25 looking for, and they know what your

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2 account number already is. So keep that
3 information to yourself.

4 Of course, as was mentioned,
5 PGW is also working with our colleagues
6 from the Philadelphia Water Department,
7 the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging,
8 and PECO at the invitation of the Police
9 Department. We're developing a
10 communications campaign, highlighting the
11 dangers posed by imposters and ways
12 people can guard against them. And I
13 think as was mentioned right now, we're
14 on track for launching with the campaign
15 in the springtime.

16 I think we're all unanimous in
17 our belief that it's in the best interest
18 of all the residents for utilities and
19 associated organizations to work together
20 and develop this unified campaign. We
21 feel that this is a more effective
22 approach. We've each been doing it for a
23 number of years, and I think coming
24 together collaboratively is the right way
25 to go, and so thank you for inviting us

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2 here today and helping to give extra
3 impetus to that drive.

4 Of course, it is regrettable
5 that criminal behavior requires each of
6 us to take these extra precautions, but a
7 few minutes spent double-checking that
8 people are who they claim to be means
9 greater safety in all of our homes.

10 That concludes my testimony.
11 Thank you, and obviously I'm happy to
12 answer any questions.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
14 much.

15 MR. MELVIN: Good afternoon.
16 My name is Michael Melvin. I am the
17 Manager of Corporate Security at PECO.
18 My role, beyond ensuring the safety of
19 each and every PECO employee and the
20 security of the sites PECO owns and
21 operates, is to help ensure the safety
22 and security of each of our 1.6 million
23 electric and nearly 500,000 natural gas
24 customers. Safety is the number one
25 priority at PECO.

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2 The impersonation of utility
3 workers and scamming of utility customers
4 is a serious concern for us at PECO. Our
5 security team investigates about 40
6 reports of impersonation incidents each
7 year. These are incidents where an
8 individual or individuals attempt to
9 enter a home or business by posing as a
10 PECO employee or a PECO contractor.
11 These incidents violate the established
12 trust our customers have with us, a trust
13 that has been built during our
14 hundred-plus year history.

15 In many of these reported
16 cases, the impersonator identifies
17 himself as a worker from the local
18 utility company. They also have
19 reportedly worn clothing to dress the
20 part or the impersonator can even be in
21 plain clothes.

22 At PECO we have worked hard to
23 have an extensive policy and
24 communications plan to help reduce
25 utility worker impersonation. As part of

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2 this, we work hard to ensure our
3 employees follow policies regarding the
4 proper disposal of PECO logo clothing and
5 equipment.

6 Just this past December, we put
7 out a lot of communications around. It's
8 the time when Goodwill and Purple Heart
9 will be asking for clothing donations,
10 and we drill it home to our employees and
11 contractors that you can't give them
12 anything with the PECO logo on it. You
13 have to remove that first.

14 We have robust communications
15 to educate customers on identifying PECO
16 workers and that PECO employees and
17 contractors always carry proper
18 identification. This is the
19 identification our employees carry.

20 PECO employees or contractors
21 will never ask customers for cash or
22 personal banking information, and
23 customers can always verify if a worker
24 is in the area by contacting PECO. We do
25 have a 1-800 number for customers to

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2 contact.

3 To help guard against
4 impersonations, PECO urges that customers
5 take the following safety precautions:

6 Always ask to see company photo
7 ID before allowing any utility worker
8 into a home or business.

9 Never pay on site for services.
10 PECO employees will never ask for cash
11 payments or personal banking info, as I
12 recently mentioned.

13 Be skeptical of individuals
14 wearing clothing with old or defaced
15 company logos. If you have any doubts,
16 ask to see a company photo ID.

17 In addition to impersonation,
18 utilities throughout the country have
19 been dealing with an increase in
20 attempted scamming reported by customers.
21 The most recent scam claims that
22 customers are behind on their account and
23 must make immediate payment to avoid
24 service termination. Customers are then
25 being asked to purchase a prepaid debit

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2 card in random amounts from local
3 pharmacies or convenience stores. The
4 customer is then directed to contact a
5 number to utilize the card for immediate
6 payment to their account. Once this
7 information is provided by the scammer,
8 the funds on the card are then removed.

9 It is our pleasure to join the
10 City of Philadelphia in this effort to
11 mitigate the issue of criminals
12 impersonating utility workers. Thank
13 you, and I'd be happy to answer any
14 questions you might have.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilman
16 Squilla.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yes.
18 Thank you all for coming out here. We do
19 appreciate your time and your service to
20 us and also in the protection of our
21 residents.

22 And I know, Howard,
23 Commissioner, you had said that when
24 you're going out to a resident's house,
25 you set up an appointment with them,

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2 whether it's to change a meter, battery
3 or whatever it may be. Now, is that the
4 case throughout all the utility
5 companies, that you actually call before
6 you go to a residence?

7 MR. O'SULLIVAN: In general,
8 yeah. You should know that we're going
9 to be there. And even if that's not the
10 case for some odd reason, except in the
11 case of an emergency, you should always
12 then just refuse entry and ask us to call
13 back and make an appointment.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is that true
15 for each utility company? Do you call
16 first?

17 MR. MELVIN: At PECO, we send
18 letters. There's a series of
19 communications. But there are cases of
20 emergency and, again, our customers can
21 always call the 1-800 number to verify.
22 But we do give the heads-up that we're
23 going to have workers in the area or an
24 appointment is scheduled.

25 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: I'd just

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2 like to clarify. If you do see two feet
3 of water outside your home, we may be
4 knocking on your door without an
5 appointment.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And there
7 are emergencies too. Even if there's a
8 gas leak or something, sometimes they
9 come and they knock on doors, because
10 it's just something that happens
11 instantaneously, but normally a lot of
12 neighbors are out by then and people are
13 around. I was more concerned of like the
14 incidents where you may need to replace a
15 battery, say, in the meter or something
16 like that, just so that people cannot be
17 caught off guard on that. But, again, if
18 they are not aware of it, the best thing
19 to do is not allow entrance and call
20 9-1-1 and ask if they were workers.

21 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: And
22 included in my testimony is one of two
23 leaflets that talk about the battery
24 change-out process, which is now pretty
25 much complete throughout the City of

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2 Philadelphia.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Is that
4 the same with the other meters, with the
5 PECO meters and/or gas meters?

6 MR. MELVIN: We're still in the
7 process of installing the smart meters.
8 Numerous meters have been installed. The
9 project has been underway for a few
10 years. But if we are going to be coming
11 to your residence to change the meter,
12 you are notified ahead of time.

13 MR. O'SULLIVAN: Same position
14 with PGW, yeah.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
17 Councilman.

18 So all meters will be outside
19 in the near future, which will require
20 less home entry?

21 MR. O'SULLIVAN: I don't think
22 that's certain that all meters would be
23 outside. I know that there are a lot of
24 for like older homes and that type of
25 thing, that may not be the case.

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2 MR. MELVIN: There will be
3 still some meters inside residences, but
4 the advantage of the smart meter is we
5 don't need to enter the house to read the
6 meter any longer.

7 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: And
8 almost all the Water Department meters
9 will remain inside the houses, but they
10 are smart meters and we do send a signal,
11 so we only have to go in there when the
12 meter has reached the end of its life,
13 which is somewhere between 20 and 30
14 years, and when a battery needs to be
15 changed out, which, again, is 15 to 20
16 years.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: So two
18 things. All of you are a part of the new
19 campaign.

20 MR. O'SULLIVAN: Be Sure Before
21 You Open the Door.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Be Sure
23 Before You Open the door. That's
24 correct, right?

25 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: Yeah.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Currently
3 you have a 9-1-1 verification system. Is
4 that true for the other two utilities?

5 MR. MELVIN: We have a 1-800
6 number that you could call.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: I got that,
8 but the question is, you can call -- a
9 senior can call 9-1-1 and know that
10 PGW -- and verify a worker.

11 MR. O'SULLIVAN: Yeah. That
12 dispatcher has a number that goes
13 directly to PGW to a 24-hour staff line,
14 yeah.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is that a
16 difficulty for the other two utility
17 companies? Is that something we can
18 aspire towards?

19 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: I'll get
20 you a full answer to that, but I know if
21 you call 9-1-1, you will be transferred
22 over to the Water Department if that's
23 the appropriate mechanism.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: So if it's
25 7:00 at night and somebody knocks at my

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2 door, I like the idea at PGW you can call
3 9-1-1 and they'll have a 24-hour
4 verification system. So the question
5 becomes, is that true today for the two
6 of you, and if not, can that be a goal
7 that we aspire towards in the near
8 future?

9 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: I
10 believe that is our policy today. If it
11 is not, I will make sure that we get to
12 do that immediately.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm going to
14 need you to do that to me in writing.
15 Budget time is coming, so I'm going to
16 ask the question again. I'm giving you a
17 heads-up that's coming.

18 What about --

19 MR. MELVIN: And our customer
20 care center is staffed 24 hours. So when
21 somebody does call that 1-800 number,
22 they will be able to speak to somebody to
23 verify an emergency or appointment, and
24 then also our dispatchers and our
25 operations control center, customer care

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2 center, they are in constant contact with
3 the 9-1-1 centers around the --

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: So the
5 question is if we could tighten that part
6 up and evaluate it first. Because if I'm
7 a senior, I'm not going to remember your
8 three different numbers. I'll remember
9 9-1-1. And if there is an instant
10 dispatch to your company that saves them
11 a step, I think that's a valuable
12 service. So if we don't have it now,
13 what I'm going to ask is if we could
14 examine whether it can be patched in
15 similar to what PGW does so that one
16 dial, it gets verified, they say yes,
17 that is a verifiable employee of PECO,
18 let them in. And if we can do that, that
19 can simplify this process. Because under
20 duress, I'm not going to remember the
21 1-800 number. I will remember 9-1-1.
22 And that's something that maybe as a task
23 force, as a group we can all agree to
24 connect to in the near future. I don't
25 think it costs anything extra. I think

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2 it's an effective cost measure that can
3 be added and prevent some of this stuff.

4 So I'm not asking you to agree
5 to it today. I know you have to go check
6 with your highers up, but we are going to
7 send a formal letter requesting that as a
8 goal and outcome from this committee
9 hearing.

10 MR. MELVIN: Certainly worth
11 examining.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are there
13 any other questions?

14 Councilwoman Blackwell.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
16 you.

17 Good morning. Thank you for
18 your testimony. We wanted to ask --
19 every now and then we hear about badges,
20 and they somehow have some look or neon
21 coloring or something that can't be
22 duplicated. We put that out there as an
23 idea. Maybe you've already thought about
24 it. It's not new and are doing it. And
25 I also heard that you're talking about

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2 dealing with PCA, and maybe you can, as
3 has been done in the past as well,
4 neither ID is new, create flyers for them
5 and flyer our bills about being careful
6 as we mail out -- as we do our mailings
7 and flyer our community so that they're
8 warned as well. Those are my two
9 questions.

10 COMMISSIONER NEUKRUG: Thank
11 you, Councilwoman. I have asked my staff
12 to review our ID's and see if there is
13 anything we can do to upgrade them, if
14 needed. And I do remind everyone,
15 though, that no matter how good the badge
16 is, if you didn't call for utility
17 service, call 9-1-1.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: That is a
19 good added question.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: So you
21 want them to consider those things.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: So that's
23 something as a result of this committee
24 hearing we will make a request to each of
25 the utility companies to evaluate their

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2 current badge system and in particular if
3 it deals with people that go to
4 customers' homes, that there might be an
5 upgrade there. So that's something that
6 we would consider as a request to you
7 guys. And the second part of that was
8 PCC, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging.
9 So I'm imagining that this Be Sure Before
10 campaign will be distributed through PCA.

11 MR. O'SULLIVAN: We're working
12 directly with the PCA right now. They're
13 providing some very useful input on how
14 to design for senior citizens. Obviously
15 their visual acuity might not be what it
16 is for younger people, and we want to
17 make sure that the material we develop is
18 appropriate for that population. So not
19 only are they giving us advice on content
20 but also in terms of design, and then
21 ultimately I think they'll be supporting
22 the distribution of that material as
23 well. So their input has been invaluable
24 thus far and continues to be.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: I hope the

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2 people manning the cameras have had an
3 opportunity to see some of the examples
4 of your uniforms. Can someone hold those
5 up for the camera folk.

6 I know you didn't come here
7 volunteering to do that, but you're going
8 to get your 15 minutes of fame today.

9 There we go. So that's PGW,
10 PWD. PGW has their helmet.

11 MR. O'SULLIVAN: Not to be
12 outdone. So we also have one of our
13 coats with the logos. But I think the
14 reality is -- we were talking about this
15 earlier on. The uniforms and what people
16 wear changes seasonally, logos change,
17 styles change, quality and color of
18 clothing changes. So the reality is,
19 it's that the only really real way to
20 verify it is to call the company directly
21 or call that 9-1-1 number before you ever
22 think about opening that door.
23 Everything else is just kind of
24 incidental.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes. It's

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2 very easy to replicate some of those
3 uniforms, particularly for those who are
4 very trusting and particularly our senior
5 population. I think the steps that we
6 take going forward with the spring
7 campaign, with a 9-1-1 verification, with
8 outreach through PCA will do a lot more
9 to keep our seniors safe. So I'm looking
10 forward to that.

11 Are there any other questions
12 for the panel?

13 MR. MELVIN: Just one comment,
14 Councilman. With the Internet nowadays
15 too, there's all sorts of opportunity to
16 reach out anywhere to get uniforms
17 copied, made up with the logos. We
18 actually put some tools in place where
19 we're required to search the Internet on
20 a certain basis, weekly, for our
21 equipment or anything that says PECO
22 that's out on the market so that we can
23 investigate that and track down who is
24 copying or producing equipment and/or
25 clothing that has our logo on it.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, that's
3 a hearing for another day. Particularly
4 you mention in your testimony the
5 homeland security implications of this,
6 which made the hair on the back of my
7 neck stand up. So I think we will
8 constantly evolve by way of verification
9 of utility workers. It's an important
10 service that you provide, but it also
11 gives us a particular vulnerability
12 because of the trust factor of a uniform.
13 So we're going to work with you and
14 looking forward to your rollout of the
15 campaign. Hopefully you will be kind
16 enough to brief the Committee on Public
17 Safety so that we can help you market it
18 to, in all of our cases, a growing senior
19 population.

20 Councilwoman Blackwell.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
22 you.

23 And could you contact Chairman
24 about how soon you can do a warning, a
25 mass warning in our mail?

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: The mailing.

3 MR. O'SULLIVAN: Absolutely.

4 The lead has been taken by Denise James
5 from the Philadelphia Police Department.
6 So she'll liaise I think with the
7 Committee.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Any other
11 questions?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Hearing
14 none, thank you very much for your
15 testimony this afternoon.

16 (Thank you.)

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are there
18 any others to testify?

19 THE CLERK: Douglas Smith and
20 Dana Goldberg. Please approach the
21 witness table and state your name and
22 title.

23 (Witnesses approached witness
24 table.)

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good

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2 afternoon. How are you? State your
3 name, begin your testimony.

4 MR. SMITH: Doug Smith, Vice
5 President, State Government Affairs for
6 Verizon. Very happy to be here and
7 testify in front of the Public Safety
8 Committee.

9 MS. GOLDBERG: Good afternoon.
10 My name is Dana Goldberg and I'm the
11 Coordinator of Project SAFE, Stop Abuse
12 and Financial Exploitation, for Senior
13 Law Center.

14 MR. SMITH: And I'll get
15 started, if I can. Some of the things
16 you're going to hear from Verizon will be
17 very similar to what you've heard from
18 some of the other utilities when it comes
19 to the policies and procedures that we
20 use to protect your constituents and our
21 customers, because safety is in fact our
22 number one priority for our employees and
23 your constituents. So, again, we're very
24 pleased to testify here in front of the
25 Committee.

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2 The unique nature of our
3 business at Verizon dictates some of the
4 safety factors that we can actually
5 provide to our customer base, and I'd
6 like to outline to you some of those
7 policies and procedures that make us
8 somewhat unique.

9 The first thing -- and you
10 might have heard this before from another
11 utility, but when it comes to Verizon
12 coming to a customer's door or
13 constituent's door, we don't come to
14 inspect facilities. We only knock on
15 your door if you've asked for a
16 maintenance call or asked for an
17 installation. So you won't see us at
18 9:00 p.m. at night knocking on your door
19 just to check on Verizon's equipment.

20 The other thing is, we have
21 something called Technician Call Through,
22 TCT. It's a program that we use where
23 our technicians will call the customers
24 first before we arrive at the home and
25 verify that someone is there, verify that

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2 we have a service order or a maintenance
3 call for that home, and that we will give
4 them a time certain what time we will be
5 there, 10 minutes, 20 minutes, 30
6 minutes, whatever the travel commitment
7 is, so that the customer knows going in
8 we're supposed to be there, we're coming
9 there, why we're coming there, and what
10 time we're going to be there. And when
11 we arrive, much like some of the other
12 utilities, we will only arrive in a
13 Verizon company vehicle with a big
14 Verizon logo on it, and we do not use
15 personal vehicles. We do not use
16 unmarked vehicles. So it's clear to the
17 customer that a Verizon logo truck
18 appears and then a Verizon employee
19 appears.

20 And in fact in a few seconds, a
21 few minutes, I'm going to introduce you
22 to Charlie Hield, who is a service
23 technician at the 3rd and Noble garage
24 here in Philadelphia and will be able to
25 demonstrate exactly what a Verizon

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2 technician is going to look like when he
3 knocks on your door. That's for the
4 benefit of the Committee, the folks in
5 this room, and those watching on the
6 Internet.

7 In addition to the company
8 vehicle, there is a Verizon ID that is
9 visible to any customer, that when we
10 knock on the door, you'll see the ID that
11 has the Verizon logo and the picture of
12 the technician. And, remember,
13 everything at Verizon, our company
14 colors, black and red. So the apparel
15 from the technician as well as the ID
16 will have the black and red theme to it.

17 And let's talk about apparel.
18 We don't have uniforms. We have a dress
19 code. That dress code requires a
20 collared shirt and Verizon branding.
21 That Verizon branding and apparel will be
22 black and red in colors, and as you heard
23 based on seasonal changes, it could be a
24 sweatshirt, it could be a polo shirt, it
25 could be a jacket. That apparel is

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2 provided by the company. It is branded.
3 Every employee must wear branded apparel.

4 The technician will most likely
5 be carrying tools unique to our business,
6 may be carrying a hard hat depending on
7 the type of job that he's being required
8 to do, all of them branded. So when we
9 come, you know it's a Verizon technician.

10 At this point, I thought it
11 might be appropriate to have Charlie
12 stand and to show you and demonstrate
13 exactly what a technician at Verizon
14 would look like when he knocks on your
15 door.

16 Charlie.

17 So here we've got the ID on the
18 lanyard. He's got --

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you move
20 up some.

21 MR. SMITH: He's got a
22 Verizon-branded sweatshirt. He'll have
23 tools typically strapped to his hips,
24 some of the small pocket tools.
25 Typically coming to the door he'll also

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2 have in his back pocket literature that
3 would indicate maintenance or repair
4 information. If it's an installation
5 job, it will be a different document. So
6 there'll be branded documentation in his
7 hand that he's supposed to be there.

8 He'll be carrying a series of
9 tools, those hard hats and other unique
10 tools that, again, identify him as a
11 Verizon technician. You can't get these
12 tools at Home Depot or Lowe's. These are
13 specific telecommunications
14 infrastructure tools.

15 So we think when it comes to
16 identifying or trying to become an
17 imposter for Verizon, very difficult to
18 be an imposter. However, that said, the
19 best defense is awareness.

20 Thank you, Charlie.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: We noticed
22 he had an appropriate Phillies hat as
23 well. That's the true test.

24 MR. SMITH: The best defense is
25 an offense. It's awareness. We've

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2 talked about that.

3 Some of the things we're doing
4 to help your constituency is explaining
5 these policies, procedures, what the
6 technician's ID will look like, what the
7 dress code is. We explain that in bill
8 inserts to our customers as well as on
9 our website so that people can in fact
10 know going in what to expect if they have
11 any questions.

12 But, again, if an impersonation
13 occurs of a Verizon technician, rare as
14 it is -- I've never heard of it happening
15 in Philadelphia in my tenure and I've
16 been in this job a long, long time. If
17 an impersonation were to occur, we would
18 immediately notify local police to make
19 sure that they are aware that it's
20 happening so that they can be sensitive
21 to any future calls of some similar
22 nature. And one of the suggestions I
23 might recommend here for the Committee to
24 consider is engaging social media. One
25 of the things I'm going to be working

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2 with internal to Verizon is to use our
3 Facebook pages, our Twitter feeds to be
4 able, on a dime, to turn and be able to
5 publicize any kind of an impersonation of
6 a Verizon technician, because social
7 media can get the word out so fast on
8 anything. And I might suggest that we
9 link in some way with your staffs so that
10 your websites can feed your
11 constituencies. And we tied the Police
12 Department Listservs and their social
13 media avenues. So a project something to
14 consider would be for us all to tie our
15 social media networks together so that if
16 an impersonation occurs, the word gets
17 out. Awareness is so critical.

18 At this point, that concludes
19 my testimony. I make myself available
20 for questions as soon as we listen to the
21 other testimony.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Since
23 they're very distinct presentations,
24 would you like to ask some questions?

25 Councilman Squilla.

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2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
3 for your testimony. When a person does
4 come and they're not sure if it's a
5 Verizon, even though they ask for them,
6 is it important -- is there a way for
7 them to call Verizon to say, Is this guy
8 real, because you can't call 9-1-1 at
9 that point.

10 MR. SMITH: That's correct. We
11 have a 1-800-VERIZON number in addition
12 to the documentation that the technician
13 will be carrying with him or her. So
14 that sliding through the door could be a
15 business card, could be the order itself
16 or any kind of documentation, the
17 demonstration of the ID. But if they
18 still are uncomfortable and don't even
19 want to open the door, they can call
20 1-800-VERIZON. Every one of our vehicles
21 has a GPS. We can, through that
22 mechanism, identify if that's a
23 technician at the door and tell them that
24 we see a truck immediately in front, we
25 have an order, it was date due, we

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2 expected that technician to be there and
3 that is who is there. Likewise if he's
4 not supposed to be there, we'll be able
5 to tell them that too.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I was just
7 wondering if somehow we can tie that into
8 a 9-1-1 feature.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Similar to
10 other utilities, are you connected to the
11 9-1-1?

12 MR. SMITH: I need to go back
13 to verify that. I'm not certain. I
14 would think we would be, but let's -- I
15 don't want to testify for sure.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: That's
17 fair.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Today is to
19 figure out where the floor is and then
20 figure out how to build beyond that. So
21 it's no A answer or --

22 MR. SMITH: I'm looking forward
23 to actually working with the Police
24 Department to see what linkages we
25 currently have and what we can have.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay. Any
3 other questions?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
6 much.

7 MS. GOLDBERG: Thank you,
8 Chairperson Jones and members of the
9 Council, for this opportunity to address
10 the growing concern over exploitation of
11 our seniors here in Philadelphia. Our
12 work at Senior Law Center is protecting
13 the rights of older Pennsylvanians.
14 Located here in Center City Philadelphia,
15 we were founded in 1978 to protect the
16 rights of seniors in need, and we now
17 serve over 8,000 seniors each year from
18 the ages of 60 to over 100 years of age
19 across Pennsylvania with legal
20 representation, education, and advocacy.
21 We save homes, prevent homelessness,
22 fight for grandparent and voting rights,
23 stop elder abuse, fraud and exploitation,
24 and promote independence and dignity. We
25 are an independent non-profit and the

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2 only non-profit organization solely
3 dedicated to providing legal protection
4 to Pennsylvania senior citizens.

5 We serve over 8,000
6 Pennsylvania seniors each year with
7 limited resources, much of which we must
8 raise anew each year and none of which
9 comes from the City of Philadelphia.
10 This year in 2014, we are leaving our
11 35th year protecting the rights of
12 seniors and the powerful impact our
13 organization has had on the lives of
14 seniors and access to justice.

15 We welcome any opportunity for
16 greater collaboration with our city's
17 leaders in law enforcement, in this
18 Council, with the Nutter Administration,
19 and with all other governmental and
20 quasi-governmental agencies in the City,
21 as all should be highly concerned about
22 the health and welfare of our over
23 quarter of a million seniors.

24 We serve with several of our
25 colleagues present today on

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2 Philadelphia's collaborative Financial
3 Exploitation Prevention Task Force for
4 Older Philadelphians, which includes
5 representation from the Police and the
6 District Attorney's Office. Several of
7 us also serve on diverse other coalitions
8 addressing victims' needs here in
9 Philadelphia, in Harrisburg, and across
10 the nation and bring the voices of the
11 senior victims we serve to those tables.

12 As to Resolution No. 130288, we
13 support the authorization of public
14 hearings to investigate the issue of
15 imposter crime in Philadelphia. We are
16 in the midst of a crisis of elder abuse
17 and exploitation in our city and in our
18 nation. In 2010, financial exploitation
19 cost older Americans over the age of 60
20 \$2.9 billion nationally, as estimated by
21 the MetLife Mature Market Institute and
22 the National Committee for the Prevention
23 of Elder Abuse. And the numbers continue
24 to grow. Imposter scams fall within the
25 top ten consumer complaint categories for

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2 the Federal Trade Commission. In 2012, 4
3 percent of all consumer complaints to the
4 Federal Trade Commission, that's 82,896
5 complaints, and 8 percent of all
6 complaints, 11,806, to the consumer
7 Financial Protection Bureau involved
8 imposter fraud. Here in Pennsylvania in
9 2012, the Pennsylvania State Police
10 reported having served 6,355 seniors over
11 the age of 60 who had been the victims of
12 fraud.

13 Our population in Philadelphia
14 is particularly at risk, as we have the
15 largest percentage of seniors of the ten
16 largest cities in the country, nearly 20
17 percent. Almost one in five of
18 Philadelphia's seniors is low income and
19 most are women. This senior population
20 is a preferred target of imposter
21 scammers who prey on the trusting nature
22 and isolation of many in our senior
23 communities. In all three cases cited in
24 Resolution No. 130288, an individual
25 represented him or herself as a utility

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2 or City worker to an elderly resident,
3 demanded access to the home, and
4 subsequently robbed the senior. The same
5 scam was attempted in Newark, Delaware in
6 September 2013 when a man approached the
7 doors of two senior citizens and
8 attempted entry, claiming to be a water
9 company employee who needed to test the
10 water. Luckily both seniors requested
11 identification, and when the man could
12 not produce identification, they pushed
13 the man out of their doorway and notified
14 the authorities.

15 Imposter scammers are becoming
16 more adept, though, at producing
17 fraudulent employee identification and
18 fake government identification. The
19 Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center
20 cautions seniors that imposter burglars
21 may appear at the home equipped with the
22 tools of the trade; for example, hard
23 hats, traffic vests or handheld radios or
24 cell phones. The best defense against
25 imposter scams is a good offense.

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2 Baltimore Gas and Electric Company in
3 Maryland, Commonwealth Edison Company in
4 Illinois, and Contra Costa Water District
5 in Concord, California are three examples
6 of utility companies who have set up
7 hotlines for consumers to verify the
8 identity of responding maintenance
9 employees. Additionally, each of these
10 companies has published alerts on their
11 websites regarding imposter scams and has
12 mailed out alerts to their customers. At
13 a minimum, the utility companies in
14 Philadelphia should do the same by
15 providing a means for verifying the
16 worker's identification.

17 Imposter scams go beyond
18 utility companies and can include the
19 impersonation of government officials,
20 including tax collection agents. As a
21 city, we can provide alerts to our
22 seniors citizens of these scams and the
23 means for verifying the identity of a
24 government official. As the means
25 employed by imposter scammers change, we

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2 need to continue to educate and empower
3 our senior citizens so that they do not
4 fall victim to these criminal endeavors.
5 Public service announcements, updated
6 alerts on City websites, outreach to
7 concentrated senior populations, and
8 targeted mailings to high-risk
9 populations such as the elderly would
10 provide greater protection against future
11 exploitation.

12 We would welcome an opportunity
13 for Philadelphia seniors to share their
14 own stories with the Committee of Public
15 Safety and to examine and strategize
16 responses and needed resources to this
17 crisis facing our seniors. We need your
18 partnership and support to make this
19 city, home to one of the largest and most
20 vulnerable populations of seniors in the
21 country, one that truly demonstrates
22 respect for our elders and their safety,
23 dignity, and wellbeing. We look forward
24 to working with you to make Philadelphia
25 a safer home for our senior population

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2 and to empowering our senior citizens in
3 their fight against exploitation.

4 Thank you, and that concludes
5 my formal testimony.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Every now
7 and then when you hear testimony -- I
8 don't know if it's true for my colleague
9 here -- you want to stand up and applaud.
10 Well, this was one of those occasions,
11 because, again, you're addressing that
12 population that we are here to talk about
13 today. We have just the aspect of
14 utility impersonators, but whether you're
15 talking about financial exploitation,
16 there was a number of those kinds of
17 activities that Councilwoman Tasco has --
18 predatory lending, these kinds of things
19 that they do.

20 So we are fascinated by you,
21 and I did note in your testimony that we
22 don't give you any money. I thought you
23 led with that. We did make note of that.
24 But what we would love to do is have you
25 work with this group, the panel, on this

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2 campaign but also, beyond that, work with
3 the Public Safety Committee to talk about
4 seniors.

5 We are noticing an alarming
6 care provider abuse, house theft.
7 Councilman Squilla had a veteran lose his
8 home because people fraudulently did
9 documents that took out loans on his
10 house and he wound up losing it. A
11 person who had served our nation wound up
12 being victimized by these kinds of scams.

13 MS. GOLDBERG: I believe he's
14 my client, Councilman.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is that
16 right?

17 THE CLERK: She was here to
18 testify before.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, you
20 made an impression with the testimony,
21 though.

22 So we would love to bring you
23 separately from this and talk about the
24 bigger picture of what is going on. We
25 talked about naturally occurring

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2 retirement communities. Well, the
3 victimizers of seniors know about these
4 communities as well, and we need to take
5 precautions now to safeguard them.

6 So we're going to invite you
7 back. We'll probably not be able to give
8 you a raise on what we contributed,
9 but -- maybe we'll double it.

10 MS. GOLDBERG: Well, I would
11 welcome the opportunity, Councilman, to
12 address the greater issue of financial
13 exploitation. And let me just say that I
14 am thrilled today about the unveiling of
15 the work that the utility companies are
16 doing with the Philadelphia Corporation
17 for Aging, and we put our support behind
18 that effort. I think any effort where
19 there's collaboration amongst all the
20 utilities and the senior community is
21 going to be the most effective method.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you so
23 much.

24 Any other questions?

25 (No response.)

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing none,
3 thank you for your testimony.

4 MS. GOLDBERG: Thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are there
6 any others to testify on this?

7 THE CLERK: No, Chair.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, I want
9 to say that we've learned a couple of
10 common threads. First of all, all of our
11 utility companies, entities care about
12 our vulnerable population, our seniors,
13 and we thank you for that. I was truly
14 encouraged about the Be Sure Be Safe
15 Before You Open -- I'm butchering it.

16 THE CLERK: Be Sure Before You
17 Open the Door.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: There you
19 go. And that that's going to be unveiled
20 in the spring.

21 A couple of common threads. If
22 we can get a common number at 9-1-1 that
23 all utility companies can be patched
24 into, whether you're Verizon, whether
25 you're the Water Department, but to be

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2 patched into that, I think we have a
3 greater chance of seniors utilizing that
4 in a common way. If you had to do a test
5 where all 800 numbers had to be written
6 down or recited by me, I would fail. I
7 know 9-1-1. So if we can get that as a
8 part of a common thread, I think that we
9 will have made progress.

10 At the end of the day, we're
11 going to work on this, particularly with
12 you, because we have a common interest in
13 keeping your customers, our constituents,
14 citizens in Philadelphia safe.

15 So thank you for that, and we
16 will recess to the call of the Chair, and
17 this concludes our hearing.

18 (Committee on Public Safety
19 concluded at 12:40 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter, and that this is a true and
correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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of the same by any means, unless under the
direct control and/or supervision of the
certifying reporter.)

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