Legislation Details

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TO THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA:

For the reasons set forth below, I hereby return to your Honorable Body as disapproved Bill No. 130701-AA, which passed on January 30, 2014.

This Bill would propose placing a Charter amendment on the May ballot to abolish, for elected officials only, the Home Rule Charter's longstanding "resign to run" rule. Under this amendment, any person holding elected office in City government could run for a different City, state, or federal office while still holding his or her elected City office. Resign to run would stay in place for all other employees and officials of the City.

As originally conceived by the framers of the Charter, the uniform application of resign to run to all City officers and employees, elected or not, was intended to protect the public interest by ensuring existing duties could be performed without the very real distractions associated with engaging in a campaign for a new elected office. This amendment would grant special dispensation to City officials who are elected.

For the past 60 years, every City official and employee, elected or not, has operated under resign to run. Though it is a rule that poses a difficult choice to prospective candidates who work in City government, I nevertheless believe it has worked. The rule has helped to ensure that the City's business-that is, the people's business-takes precedence over the unique and formidable demands of an election campaign. As elected officials, we have all accepted that responsibility under oath, and live it every day.

Let me be clear: individuals who feel called to serve the public as an elected official should be free to run for office. This is a basic element of our democracy. But even with resign to run in place, Philadelphia's history is replete with City officials who made the difficult decision to resign from City office in order to stand for election to a different office. Resign to run and the freedom to seek elected office can and do coexist.

Voters were asked at the ballot box to consider another resign to run Charter amendment in 2007. Their response was clear: keep resign to run. My view is no different than the one expressed by the voters. The framers of the Charter got it right for Philadelphia's government, its employees, and its citizens.

For the foregoing reasons, I believe that the Charter's resign to run provisions should be maintained as they were originally drafted. Accordingly, I am hereby returning this Bill disapproved.

Respectfully,
MICHAEL A. NUTTER

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