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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 236

Offered January 24, 2000

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the economic condition and disaster assistance needs of Virginia's farmers.

Patrons—Couric, Chichester, Hanger, Hawkins, Marye, Miller, K.G., Puckett, Reynolds and Watkins;
Delegates: Bloxom, Hargrove, Landes, Morgan, Orrock, Pollard, Sherwood, Van Yahres and
Weatherholtz

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, agriculture plays a significant role in the Commonwealth's economy, generating approximately \$35.9 billion in total annual sales, which represents 12.3 percent of all sales in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, agriculture contributes approximately \$19.5 billion or 11.2 percent of Virginia's gross state product; and

WHEREAS, agriculture creates approximately 388,000 jobs in Virginia, or nearly 10 percent of total jobs statewide; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, Virginia's farmers have faced an overwhelming challenge in maintaining their production of food and fiber while coping with major losses in income caused by natural disasters and record low commodity prices; and

WHEREAS, promoting and maintaining agricultural production in Virginia is a critical issue that affects the future of the state's economy and the welfare of all Virginians; and

WHEREAS, many state and federal agencies are involved in helping farmers respond to natural disasters and to the related economic and natural resource problems created by prolonged and catastrophic natural disasters; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth should review the general economic condition of agricultural producers and its natural disaster assistance policies to determine how that policy may be strengthened and identify any additional assistance that should be provided to producers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the economic condition and disaster assistance needs of Virginia's farmers. The joint subcommittee shall be composed of 16 members, which shall include nine legislative members and seven nonlegislative citizen and ex officio members as follows: five members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker; four members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; two members of the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services and one young farmer to represent the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation to be appointed by the Speaker; two members of the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services and one young farmer to represent the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services to serve ex officio.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall determine (i) how the Commonwealth and its agencies, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, may work more effectively and timely in assisting Virginia's agricultural producers when a natural disaster occurs, and (ii) any other actions that may be required to improve the general economic condition of Virginia's farmers.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$14,250.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Department of Emergency Services. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

The joint subcommittee shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2001 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the study.

INTRODUCED

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