

006311416

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 236**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
on February 14, 2000)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Couric)

Requesting the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services to study the economic condition and disaster assistance needs of Virginia's farmers.

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 the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services be requested to study the economic condition and disaster assistance needs of Virginia's farmers.

In conducting its study, Board 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.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Board, upon request.

The Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, and 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.