

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 243

Directing the Joint Rules Committee to study ways to improve the legislative process and to maintain the citizen legislature.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 9, 2000

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 8, 2000

WHEREAS, the part-time "citizen legislature" is an integral part of Virginia's history and an institution that the General Assembly is committed to continuing into the twenty-first century; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly is equally committed to promoting the full and open consideration of issues, increasing public accessibility to the legislative process and fostering the most efficient use of the legislature's time; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, the workload of the General Assembly has grown in magnitude, scope and complexity, increasing the amount of time members must deal with legislative affairs; and

WHEREAS, procedures and practices governing the scheduling of activities of the General Assembly and its committees have gone largely unchanged during the past twenty years; and

WHEREAS, proposed constitutional amendments to change the commencement date of the General Assembly have been introduced to alleviate the workload around the holiday season for members and their staffs, but have never been submitted to the voters for approval; and

WHEREAS, a recess at the commencement of the session would allow for more time for bills to be printed and reviewed, thereby giving legislators an additional opportunity to confer with their constituents on matters before the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, most interim meetings are scheduled through the polling of members, and are held during various times of the month, often resulting in personal and professional conflicts as well as limiting members' ability to make advanced plans during the interim; and

WHEREAS, many states provide for an organizational meeting prior to the convening of their legislative session to adopt rules and make standing committee appointments; and

WHEREAS, comprehensive review of the processes and procedures governing the activities of the General Assembly would yield valuable information that could lead to the streamlining of operations and allow the General Assembly to continue to prosper as a citizen legislature; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Joint Rules Committee be directed to study ways to improve the legislative process and to maintain the citizen legislature. The study shall include, but not be limited to, an examination and evaluation of: (i) bill drafting practices, including, but not limited to, a review of titles, summaries, and conventions such as the use of population brackets; (ii) prefilings; (iii) procedures for the introduction and patronage of legislation; (iv) committee and subcommittee size and responsibilities; (v) consideration of legislation in committees, subcommittees, and on the floor; (vi) the use of technology, including technology for filing legislation and adding and removing copatrons electronically; (vii) the scheduling of interim meetings and activities; (viii) session dates and the possible inclusion of recesses; (ix) the budget process; (x) staffing services; (xi) orientation and training of members and staff; and (xii) other aspects of the legislative process designed to improve efficiency and maintain the citizen legislature; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That a Citizen Advisory Board shall be established to assist the Joint Rules Committee in its work as prescribed in this resolution, and on other issues as may be directed by the Committee. The Citizen Advisory Board shall be composed of eight members as follows: three citizen members appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections and five citizen members appointed by the Speaker of the House.

The direct cost of this study shall not exceed \$4,800.

The Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Delegates along with the Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Rules Committee, upon request.

The Joint Rules Committee 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.

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