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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 244

Offered January 24, 2000

*Encouraging local governing bodies to establish voluntary citizen review panels.*

Patrons—Maxwell, Lambert and Miller, Y.B.; Delegates: Christian, Crittenden, Melvin and Robinson

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Status and Needs of African-American Males in Virginia was directed to identify factors contributing to the plight of African-American men in the Commonwealth, and to recommend feasible alternatives to address such problems; and

WHEREAS, in conducting the study, the joint subcommittee traveled to locations across the Commonwealth to solicit public participation and comment regarding educational, cultural, health, economic, political, social, and criminal justice issues of citizens; and

WHEREAS, among the plethora of issues considered by the joint subcommittee, a primary concern among citizens, particularly minority and low-income communities, was the tension between citizens and law enforcement agencies; and

WHEREAS, many persons, stigmatized by race, ethnicity, and economic status, expressed vehemently their objections to certain police practices, such as racial profiling, slow response to citizen calls, poor communication with citizens, arrogant and condescending attitudes of too many law enforcement officers, abuse of power, alienation and detachment from the community, and the "code of silence"; and

WHEREAS, these problems were echoed across the state by persons from diverse backgrounds, and these citizens urged the General Assembly to consider and respond constructively to the simmering hostility and resentment toward law enforcement agencies in many of Virginia's urban areas in which racial and ethnic populations predominate; and

WHEREAS, in many jurisdictions throughout the nation, voluntary citizen review panels have been established to review and mediate problems between citizens and law enforcement agencies, promote dialogue between elected officials, law enforcement and the constituency; and

WHEREAS, voluntary citizen review panels interface with community and civic groups, represent the community before governing bodies concerning proposals and issues affecting quality of life, assist law enforcement agencies in obtaining vital information in the resolution of criminal investigations, facilitate communication between citizens and police, and aid in crime deterrence; and

WHEREAS, the creation of such panels in localities throughout Virginia would help to relieve the consternation of citizens and growing attitudes of resentment toward police by affording public participation in resolving community problems; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That local governing bodies be encouraged to establish voluntary citizen review panels to present the views of citizens before the governing body, further communication between citizens and law enforcement agencies, and represent citizens in seeking resolution to problems with law enforcement agencies; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate shall send a copy of this resolution to the Executive Director of the Virginia Municipal League, the Director of the Virginia Association of Counties, the Presidents of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police and the Virginia Sheriffs Association, requesting that they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of the Virginia General Assembly in this matter.

INTRODUCED

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