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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 572

Offered January 10, 2001

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Urging the Secretaries of Commerce and Trade, and Natural Resources to ensure that the plan containing an analysis of the impact that certain state agencies' regulations and projects have on the conversion of farm and forest lands be submitted annually to the General Assembly.

Patrons—Deeds, Landes and McQuigg

Referred to Committee on Conservation and Natural Resources

WHEREAS, seventy-seven percent of the forestland in Virginia is privately-owned; and
WHEREAS, farm and forest lands are being converted to nonagricultural and nonforestal uses and the loss of this land undermines the Commonwealth's food and forest production capabilities; and

WHEREAS, § 3.1-18.4 of the Code of Virginia recognizes that "(a)griculture, forestry, and related enterprises comprise a significant segment of the Commonwealth's economy and play a critical role in defining the character of the Commonwealth, and their preservation should be encouraged"; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of the Commonwealth not only "to conserve and protect and to encourage the development and improvement of the Commonwealth's agricultural and forestal lands for the production of food and other agricultural and forestal products" but also "...to conserve and protect agricultural and forestal lands as valued natural and ecological resources which provide essential open spaces for clean air sheds, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, as well as aesthetic purposes" (Virginia Code § 15.2-4301); and

WHEREAS, during the 2000 Session of the General Assembly the Preservation of Important Farmlands Act was amended to require the Departments of Transportation, Health, Conservation and Recreation, and Environmental Quality, and the State Corporation Commission to prepare a plan analyzing the impact of each agency's regulations and projects have on the conversion of both farm lands and forest lands; and

WHEREAS, the amendments to this act also required that the plan be updated and submitted to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade and the Secretary of Natural Resources annually; and

WHEREAS, the Secretaries are to review the plan in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the State Forester, and may recommend improvements in the plan; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Commerce and Trade is required, by the statute, to submit a written report by December 1 of each year to the chairmen of the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources on the impacts of state agency actions on the conversion of farm and forest lands; and

WHEREAS, such a plan and the resulting report will enhance coordination and planning among state agencies of major state projects, thereby enabling the agencies to better be able to meet the policy objective of conserving farm and forest lands; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly urges the Secretary of Commerce and Trade and the Secretary of Natural Resources to ensure that the plan containing an analysis of the impact that certain state agencies' regulations and projects have on the conversion of farm and forest lands be submitted annually to the General Assembly; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Virginia Board of Forestry be requested to (i) review those programs administered by the various state agencies that directly or indirectly affect the sustainability and long-term health of the forest resources of the Commonwealth; (ii) identify programs administered by those agencies that affect the management of forest lands, regardless of ownership; (iii) direct all such agencies to develop cooperative agreements, memoranda of understanding and other appropriate cooperative mechanisms to effectively administer such programs; and (iv) recommend to the Governor and to the chairs of the House Committee of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources initiatives and actions that will enhance the health of the forest resource, while protecting the Commonwealth's environment and associated natural, historical and cultural resources. All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Departments of Forestry, Environmental Quality, Game and Inland Fisheries, Conservation and Recreation, and the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department, are requested to cooperate in this effort.

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Board of Forestry.

INTRODUCED

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