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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 409

Offered January 12, 2001

Designating the fourth week in October as "Read Aloud to a Child Week."

Patrons—Lambert, Bolling, Edwards, Houck, Lucas, Marsh and Miller, Y.B.

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the ability to read is the basis of literacy and is the single most important activity for building knowledge for personal and corporate success; and

WHEREAS, reading is fundamental to the entire school curriculum and to an individual's ability to write, converse, and compute; and

WHEREAS, reading, the foundation of literacy, enables an individual to employ critical thinking and problem-solving skills proficiently to obtain employment and function in society, pursue personal goals, and develop his knowledge and potential; and

WHEREAS, with the advent of a new century, increasing globalization, the exponential growth in technology and the information industry, and the challenges of a new world economy in which emerging foreign powers exert significant influence, it is imperative that the Commonwealth promote reading and increase the level of literacy among all its citizens; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's position as a leader without peer in the new digital society is endangered without a literate, highly skilled, versatile, and competent workforce, and the Commonwealth must prepare its citizens to seize the unconventional opportunities that lie ahead; and

WHEREAS, many Virginians, young and old, are not able to participate fully in society and the new world because they are functionally illiterate or have such marginal reading skills that they are unable to read to their children, perform complex tasks, complete a job application form, sign their names, read a food or prescription label or a traffic sign, comprehend and follow simple oral and written directions, benefit from remedial education and job training programs, or conduct basic life skills such as paying bills or balancing a checkbook; and

WHEREAS, employers report difficulty finding the skilled workers that they need, and the U. S. Department of Labor estimates that illiteracy costs businesses and taxpayers \$25 billion a year through workplace accidents, lost productivity, unrealized tax revenues, welfare payments, and crime; and

WHEREAS, with appropriate assistance and encouragement, many Virginian children and adults who cannot read can learn to read, and those with poor reading skills can become better readers, reversing these dismal statistics and improving the quality of life and the future for all who live in the Old Dominion; and

WHEREAS, although noteworthy, merely acknowledging and appreciating the benefits of reading and embracing the vision of a Commonwealth and nation of readers and achievers are inadequate to reach this goal; and

WHEREAS, fulfilling the vision requires that our children and their families, the education community at all levels, and the public, embrace and value lifelong learning and the exciting rewards of knowledge that result from reading; and

WHEREAS, the increasing number of non-readers may be reduced by reading to children, even infants, to inform, stimulate, entertain, inspire, arouse curiosity, and comfort and reassure them; and

WHEREAS, reading aloud to children conditions their brains to associate reading with pleasure, establishes a base of knowledge from which they can draw, provide a reading role model, and create a lifetime reader and learner; and

WHEREAS, children who are read aloud to by loving and caring parents, relatives, and other adults are more likely to have higher reading skills, become productive members of their community, less likely to drop out of school and create disciplinary problems, and experience greater school success; and

WHEREAS, in October of each year, Read Aloud Virginia, Inc., in conjunction with the national Read Aloud Program, promotes "Read Aloud to a Child Week" in Virginia to motivate all children to develop a passion for reading, a love for books, and an appreciation for lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, parents, teachers, child caregivers, health care professionals, the religious community, civic and professional organizations, and all literate persons throughout the Commonwealth should be urged to read aloud to a child every day, and particularly during "Read Aloud to a Child Week"; and

WHEREAS, designating the fourth week of October as "Read Aloud to a Child Week" is an opportune time to begin to build a Commonwealth and nation of readers and achievers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the fourth week in October be

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59 designated as "Read Aloud to a Child Week"; and, be it

60 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Governor be requested to call upon the citizens of the
61 Commonwealth to recognize and celebrate "Read Aloud to a Child Week" with appropriate activities
62 that encourage all literate adults to read aloud to children; and, be it

63 RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the
64 Secretary of Education, the Superintendent of Public Education, the President of the Virginia Parents and
65 Teachers Association, the Director of the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center at Virginia
66 Commonwealth University, and the Chairman of Read Aloud Virginia, requesting that they disseminate
67 copies of this resolution among their respective constituents so that they may be apprised of the sense of
68 the General Assembly in this matter.