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**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 139**  
**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE**  
(Proposed by the House Committee on Rules  
on February 10, 2002)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Joannou)

*Establishing the joint subcommittee to study the feasibility of city consolidation in South Hampton Roads.*

WHEREAS, the Hampton Roads region is composed of 15 cities, counties and towns, and consists of an area of 2,000 square miles with more than 1.5 million residents; and

WHEREAS, the contiguous South Hampton Roads Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach consist of an area of over 1,000 square miles with more than one million residents; and

WHEREAS, these five cities face many similar challenges such as development and maintenance of transportation networks, economic development and the provision of basic governmental services such as water supply and wastewater treatment; and

WHEREAS, these cities also face a number of dissimilar challenges such as rapid population gain or loss and expansion or contraction of the public school system; and

WHEREAS, according to recent reports, the region as a whole has a per capita income of just 87.4 percent of the national average; and

WHEREAS, the region contains an enormous amount of tax-exempt property, thereby putting a significant strain on local revenue-raising ability; and

WHEREAS, the Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach currently offer duplicative services that tend to lead to duplication of public resources; and

WHEREAS, the future welfare of the Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach may depend on overcoming barriers to cooperation, such as Virginia's unique local government structure of independent cities; and

WHEREAS, the Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach may be able to look to other examples throughout the country of how five localities can be consolidated into a single city; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the feasibility of city consolidation in South Hampton Roads. The joint subcommittee shall consist of 24 members, which shall include seven legislative members and 17 nonlegislative members as follows: five members of the House of Delegates, one member from each of the five named cities, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; two members of the Senate, who shall reside in one of the five cities, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and the mayors of the Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, and Portsmouth, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; the mayors of the Cities of Suffolk and Virginia Beach, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; one member of the school board of one of the five cities, the city manager of one of the five cities, one constitutional officer from one of the five cities, and one representative each of the maritime industry, the realtors association, and the homebuilding industry, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates; and one constitutional officer from one of the five cities, one representative each from the community college system, the rail industry, and the print media, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. The mayors of the five cities appointed to the joint subcommittee shall serve with full voting privileges. All legislative and non-legislative appointees to the joint subcommittee shall live within one of the five cities. The chairman and the vice-chairman of the joint subcommittee shall be members of the General Assembly.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall examine the feasibility of consolidating the Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach into a single city. The joint subcommittee shall examine other models whereby localities were consolidated into a single city that operates under the strong mayor/council form of government, and determine whether such a system, with a directly elected mayor, would be feasible in South Hampton Roads, to be phased in over a period of 10 to 20 years. The joint subcommittee shall further study the feasibility of permitting the consolidation of a particular city only upon a favorable vote by referendum in such city and the procedure by which the consolidation may go forward with fewer than five cities if the referendum was rejected in one or more cities.

The joint subcommittee shall examine the feasibility of allowing the constitutional officers of each of the consolidating cities to retain their individual positions during an interim period of time or until the retirement of such an officer and shall further explore an efficient method of eventually transferring the

60 duties of such officers to a single office for the consolidated city.

61 Other issues to be examined by the joint subcommittee shall include (i) the method by which the  
62 individual debts and obligations of the consolidating cities shall become the debts and obligations of the  
63 consolidated city; (ii) the feasibility of providing for oversight by an outside entity of new local debt of  
64 the consolidating cities during the transition period between the time of voter approval of the  
65 consolidation and the actual consolidation; (iii) the means by which utility systems within the  
66 consolidating cities may be efficiently combined or coordinated so as to provide cost-effective and  
67 uninterrupted service to the region; (iv) the feasibility of phasing in a consolidated school system under  
68 the leadership of a single school board; and (v) whether an amendment to the Constitution of Virginia  
69 will be required in order to implement a proposed consolidation.

70 All meetings of the joint subcommittee shall be held within the five-city area with at least one  
71 meeting to be held in each of the five cities during the course of the study. The direct costs of this  
72 study shall not exceed \$7,500.

73 The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance  
74 shall be provided by the Commission on Local Government, the Department of Education, the State  
75 Board of Elections, the Auditor of Public Accounts and the Department of Taxation. All other agencies  
76 of the Commonwealth shall also provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

77 The joint subcommittee shall complete its work by November 30, 2002, and shall submit its findings  
78 and recommendations to the Governor and the 2003 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the  
79 procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative  
80 documents.

81 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint  
82 Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the  
83 study.