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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 163

Offered January 9, 2002

Prefiled January 9, 2002

Requesting the Center for Innovative Technology and the Secretary of Technology to study the means for advancing affordable, high-bandwidth electronic networks in rural Virginia.

Patrons—Saxman, May, Abbitt, Bell, Bryant, Byron, Carrico, Councill, Dudley, Hogan, Hurt, Janis, Johnson, Kilgore, Landes, Lingamfelter, Louderback, Marshall, D.W., Nutter, Stump and Wright; Senators: Hawkins and Ruff

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the future economic well-being of Virginia's rural areas will, in large part, be determined by the degree of access they have to affordable, high-bandwidth electronic networks and how well rural Virginians are prepared to use them; and

WHEREAS, in the coming digital economy, rural businesses will have a growing need to be efficiently connected with business partners and customers; and

WHEREAS, without this capability, rural areas will be left with only low-wage, regionally-focused businesses that are severely limited in their potential to grow and compete in the new economy; and

WHEREAS, because private investors can usually obtain higher rates of return from telecommunications infrastructure investments in larger urban centers, it is not evident when, or if, market forces will cause private investors to act to meet the telecommunications infrastructure needs of rural Virginia without some intervention by the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Innovative Technology and the Secretary of Technology have considerable expertise in the complex issues surrounding access to such telecommunications infrastructure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates the Senate concurring, That the Center for Innovative Technology and the Secretary of Technology be requested to study the means for advancing affordable, high-bandwidth electronic networks in rural Virginia. The Center for Innovative Technology and the Secretary of Technology shall coordinate meetings with the public and private stakeholders to achieve the following goals:

1. Evaluate the present state and need for new infrastructure in rural Virginia to fill strategic gaps in present commercial networks and coordinate plans to fill the gaps;

2. Set bandwidth goals with a timetable for achieving the goals; and

3. Encourage private development and, where necessary, facilitate the extension of advanced networks throughout the state to serve rural counties, cities and towns with affordable, high-bandwidth connections for businesses, local governments, education, health care and citizens.

The Center for Innovative Technology and the Secretary of Technology shall further recommend a means or criteria by which areas that are not sufficiently served by the private sector at minimally-established data rates, be permitted to create public/private partnerships to provide the necessary services or, alternatively, to create the necessary services themselves with such services to be offered to the private sector at fair market value at the appropriate time.

The Center for Innovative Technology and the Secretary of Technology shall coordinate their work with the Tobacco Commission and the E-58 project. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Center for Innovative Technology and the Secretary of Technology, upon request.

The Center for Innovative Technology and the Secretary of Technology shall complete their work by November 30, 2002, and shall submit their written findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2003 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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HJ163