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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 172

Offered January 9, 2002

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Encouraging all state and local government agencies and individuals to incorporate machine-readable privacy policies and the Platform for Privacy Preferences Project specification (P3P) into all agency and personal government websites.

Patrons—Brink, Almand, Amundson and Van Landingham; Senators: Edwards and Puller

Referred to Committee on Science and Technology

WHEREAS, consumers are justifiably concerned about their personal information being used by commercial, nonprofit and government entities in our increasingly interconnected society; and

WHEREAS, Internet users, in particular, are justifiably concerned about the collection and use of their personal information when they visit sites on the World Wide Web; and

WHEREAS, providing notice to consumers as to what information will be collected and how it will be used is necessary to allow them to make informed decisions regarding the disclosure of personal information; and

WHEREAS, many online privacy policies are lengthy documents written in arcane legal language that discourages Internet users from reading and understanding the policy; and

WHEREAS, machine-readable privacy policies allow websites to transmit information about their privacy practices in a standardized format that can be read by a web browser or other software, automatically be compared to the pre-established privacy preferences of the user, and warn a user when the site's policy does not match the user's preferences; and

WHEREAS, transparent notice of privacy practices and automated warnings of unacceptable privacy policies empower Internet users to make fully informed choices without restricting or impeding their online activities; and

WHEREAS, such empowerment of users leads to further growth of the Internet by creating an environment of trust for Internet-based transactions and interactions; and

WHEREAS, the World Wide Web Consortium (commonly known as the W3C), the 500-member international consortium that sets interoperability standards for Internet technology, has developed a specification for machine-readable privacy policies under the auspices of the Platform for Privacy Preferences Project (P3P); and

WHEREAS, machine-readable privacy policies and the P3P specification are important tools in protecting the privacy of Internet users; and

WHEREAS, P3P-enabled web browsers and software for generating P3P-compliant privacy policies are already available to Internet users; and

WHEREAS, the voluntary development and implementation by private consortia and companies of the P3P specification and other privacy-enhancing technologies provides an important step in protecting the privacy of Internet users and promoting the future growth of the Internet; and

WHEREAS, the success of the P3P specification depends on the widespread adoption and deployment of machine-readable privacy policies; and

WHEREAS, the government should lead by example in empowering and enabling citizens to protect their privacy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That all state and local government agencies and individuals be encouraged to incorporate machine-readable privacy policies and the Platform for Privacy Preferences Project specification (P3P) into all agency and personal government websites; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Virginia Information Providers Network (VIPNet) be encouraged to deploy P3P-compliant privacy policies on all official and unofficial websites under its control and to work through its parent company, National Information Consortium, Inc. (NIC) to encourage other governments, state and local, to adopt P3P as the standard for their websites; that members of the General Assembly be encouraged to deploy P3P-compliant privacy policies on their official websites and on any unofficial or campaign-related websites; that each office of the General Assembly be encouraged to deploy P3P-compliant privacy policies on any website under the control of such office; that the Governor encourage each executive department and agency to deploy P3P-compliant privacy policies on any website under the control of such department or agency; that all political subdivisions of the Commonwealth be encouraged to deploy P3P-compliant privacy policies on any website under their control; and, that any legislation relating to online privacy should take into consideration the

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59 terminology of the P3P specification and should recognize P3P-compliant policies as a means for
60 providing Internet users with notice regarding online privacy policies; and, be it
61 RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution
62 to VIPNet, all state agency and department heads and the chief executive of all localities requesting that
63 they further disseminate copies of this resolution to their respective constituents so that they may be
64 apprised of the encouragement of the Virginia General Assembly in this matter.