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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 204

Offered January 11, 2002

*Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the desirability of creating a Virginia Redistricting Commission.*

Patron—Moran

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, at least 11 states have commissions or boards to conduct state legislative redistricting, either as the final redistricting authority or as an advisory body to present initial plans to the legislature; and

WHEREAS, at least five states have commissions or boards for congressional redistricting; and

WHEREAS, excessive partisanship in drawing lines makes it more difficult to develop and adopt plans that meet the intricate constitutional, statutory, and judicial guidelines that now apply to redistricting; and

WHEREAS, such practices as drawing "safe" seats for incumbents or one party reduces election composition, voter choice, and predictably leads to low levels of voting and participation; and

WHEREAS, the ability of legislators to draw their own districts creates at the least the appearance of a conflict of interests; and

WHEREAS, a plan initially proposed by a bipartisan or nonpartisan commission would offer a neutral benchmark; and

WHEREAS, an advisory commission would relieve the General Assembly of some of the time-consuming burden of redistricting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the desirability of creating a Virginia Redistricting Commission. The joint subcommittee shall be composed of 11 members, which shall include eight legislative members and three nonlegislative members as follows: five members of the House of Delegates, 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; three members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; two nonlegislative members to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; and one nonlegislative member to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall determine (i) the advantages and disadvantages of establishing a redistricting commission, (ii) whether the redistricting commission should be advisory to the General Assembly or an independent redistricting body, (iii) the best method for selecting members to the commission, (iv) a schedule for the commission to propose or adopt redistricting plans, (v) the scope of the commission's powers and duties, (vi) short-term and long-term staffing needs, and (vii) what statutory standards or criteria the General Assembly should establish to guide the commission in its work.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$11,500.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

The joint subcommittee shall complete its work by November 30, 2002, and shall submit its 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.

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

INTRODUCED

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