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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 604

Offered January 8, 2003

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*Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the acclimation of the Commonwealth's ethnically diverse population. Report.*

Patrons—Cox, Albo, Cosgrove, Darner, Devolites, Janis, Jones, D.C., McQuigg, O'Bannon, Rapp, Sears, Suit and Wardrup; Senators: Martin, O'Brien and Stolle

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the 2000 United States Census recorded 570,279 foreign-born residents in the Commonwealth, representing 8.1 percent of the state's overall population and an increase of 82.9 percent above the 1990 foreign-born population of 311,809 residents; and

WHEREAS, the 2000 Census found that 47.2 percent of Virginia's foreign-born population had arrived in the Commonwealth since 1990; and

WHEREAS, between 1990 and 2000 the share of non-English speakers at home in the Commonwealth increased by nearly half, from 7.3 percent to 10.8 percent; and

WHEREAS, empirical evidence indicates that language barriers, economic and health care disparity, and higher criminal victimization present serious challenges to foreign-born residents and their integration into the Commonwealth's economic and social structure; and

WHEREAS, the economic impact of immigration on the Commonwealth has not been fully analyzed and further examination is needed to determine the contribution of the foreign-born residents to state and local revenue and expenditures; and

WHEREAS, a study of the laws, regulations, policies, and strategies is needed to determine how to facilitate acclimation and address the problems and challenges resulting from an expanding immigrant population in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the acclimation of the Commonwealth's ethnically diverse population. In conducting its study, the Commission shall (i) identify the potential need for State, regional, and local government services to the immigrant populations in the Commonwealth that are unique or typically exceed those of the general population; (ii) examine the benefits and the costs of the major immigrant populations to the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth's economy; (iii) review federal government policies and programs that affect the immigrant populations in the Commonwealth and that could have an impact on State or local initiatives; (iv) examine options for local, regional, and State governments to facilitate acclimation of the immigrant populations into the Commonwealth's economy and social fabric while preserving ethnic and cultural identity (including a review of initiatives other states have taken in assisting new, ethnically diverse populations); and (v) recommend changes in the Commonwealth's laws and regulations, as appropriate, to ensure equal opportunity for all ethnic groups. In conducting its review, the staff of the Commission shall utilize surveys, focus groups, or other appropriate methodologies to solicit from leaders of various immigrant populations their input on problems and challenges they believe their community members face that can be addressed by State or local government actions.

Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Taxation, upon request. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2003, and the Chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2004 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Commission intends to submit to the Governor and the General Assembly a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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