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HOUSE BILL NO. 37

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled December 1, 2003

A BILL to provide for the submission to the voters of a proposed amendment to Section 16 of Article V of the Constitution of Virginia, relating to succession to the office of Governor.

 Patron—Putney

 Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. It shall be the duty of the officers conducting the election directed by law to be held on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November 2004, at the places appointed for holding the same, to open a poll and take the sense of the qualified voters upon the ratification or rejection of the proposed amendment to the Constitution of Virginia, contained herein and in the joint resolution proposing such amendment, to wit:

Amend Section 16 of Article V of the Constitution of Virginia as follows:

ARTICLE V
EXECUTIVE

Section 16. Succession to the office of Governor.

When the Governor-elect is disqualified, resigns, or dies following his election but prior to taking office, the Lieutenant Governor-elect shall succeed to the office of Governor for the full term. When the Governor-elect fails to assume office for any other reason, the Lieutenant Governor-elect shall serve as Acting Governor.

Whenever the Governor transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Delegates his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Lieutenant Governor as Acting Governor.

Whenever the Attorney General, the President pro tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Delegates, or a majority of the total membership of the General Assembly, transmit to the Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Delegates their written declaration that the Governor is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Lieutenant Governor shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting Governor.

Thereafter, when the Governor transmits to the Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Delegates his written declaration that no inability exists, he shall resume the powers and duties of his office unless the Attorney General, the President pro tempore of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Delegates, or a majority of the total membership of the General Assembly, transmit within four days to the Clerk of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Delegates their written declaration that the Governor is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office. Thereupon the General Assembly shall decide the issue, convening within forty-eight hours for that purpose if not already in session. If within twenty-one days after receipt of the latter declaration or, if the General Assembly is not in session, within twenty-one days after the General Assembly is required to convene, the General Assembly determines by three-fourths vote of the elected membership of each house of the General Assembly that the Governor is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Lieutenant Governor shall become Governor; otherwise, the Governor shall resume the powers and duties of his office.

In the case of the removal of the Governor from office or in the case of his disqualification, death, or resignation, the Lieutenant Governor shall become Governor.

If a vacancy exists in the office of Lieutenant Governor when the Lieutenant Governor is to succeed to the office of Governor or to serve as Acting Governor, the Attorney General, if he is eligible to serve as Governor, shall succeed to the office of Governor for the unexpired term or serve as Acting Governor. If the Attorney General is ineligible to serve as Governor, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, if he is eligible to serve as Governor, shall succeed to the office of Governor for the unexpired term or serve as Acting Governor. If a vacancy exists in the office of the Speaker of the House of Delegates or if the Speaker of the House of Delegates is ineligible to serve as Governor, the House of Delegates shall convene and fill the vacancy.

In the event of an emergency or enemy attack upon the soil of Virginia and a resulting inability of the House of Delegates to convene to fill the vacancy, the Speaker of the House, the person designated to act in his stead as prescribed in the Rules of the House of Delegates, the President pro tempore of

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59 *the Senate, or the majority leader of the Senate, in that designated order, shall serve as Acting*
60 *Governor until such time as the House of Delegates convenes to elect a Governor.*

61 *The General Assembly may provide by law for the waiver of the eligibility requirements for the*
62 *Attorney General, Speaker of the House, or acting Speaker to serve as Governor or Acting Governor in*
63 *the event of an emergency or enemy attack upon the soil of Virginia as evidenced by a proclamation of*
64 *the Governor or alternative authority prescribed by law.*

65 § 2. The ballot shall contain the following question:

66 "Question: Shall Section 16 of Article V of the Constitution of Virginia be amended to provide for
67 additional possible successors to fill the office of Governor in the event of an emergency or enemy
68 attack and until the House of Delegates is able to meet to elect a Governor?"

69 The ballots shall be prepared, distributed and voted, and the results of the election shall be
70 ascertained and certified, in the manner prescribed by § 24.2-684 of the Code of Virginia. The State
71 Board of Elections shall comply with § 30-19.9 of the Code of Virginia and shall cause to be sent to the
72 electoral boards of each county and city sufficient copies of the full text of the amendment and question
73 contained herein for the officers of election to post in each polling place on election day.

74 The electoral board of each county and city shall make out, certify and forward an abstract of the
75 votes cast for and against such proposed amendment in the manner now prescribed by law in relation to
76 votes cast in general elections.

77 The State Board of Elections shall open and canvass such abstracts and examine and report the
78 whole number of votes cast at the election for and against such amendment in the manner now
79 prescribed by law in relation to votes cast in general elections. The State Board of Elections shall record
80 a certified copy of such report in its office, and without delay make out and transmit to the Governor an
81 official copy of such report, certified by it. The Governor shall, without delay, make proclamation of the
82 result, stating therein the aggregate vote for and against the amendment.

83 If a majority of those voting vote in favor of the amendment, it shall become effective on January 1,
84 2005.

85 The expenses incurred in conducting this election shall be defrayed as in the case of election of
86 members of the General Assembly.