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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 203

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled January 14, 2004

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

 Patron—Moran

 Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, approximately 17 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, seven 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 now applicable to redistricting; and

WHEREAS, the practice of drawing "safe" seats for incumbents or for one party reduces election competition and 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 consist of 11 members that include eight legislative members and three nonlegislative citizen members. Members shall be appointed as follows: five members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates 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 citizen members to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates; and one nonlegislative citizen member to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. Nonlegislative citizen members of the joint subcommittee shall be citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Unless otherwise approved in writing by the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk, nonlegislative citizen members shall be reimbursed only for travel originating and ending within the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of attending meetings. If a companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required. The joint subcommittee shall elect a chairman and vice chairman from among its membership, who shall be members of the General Assembly.

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.

Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates. Legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the joint subcommittee shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Services. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee for this study, upon request.

The joint subcommittee shall be limited to four meetings for the 2004 interim, and the direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$9,200 without approval as set out in this resolution. Approval for unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require the written authorization of the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk. If a companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required.

No recommendation of the joint subcommittee shall be adopted if a majority of the House members or a majority of the Senate members appointed to the joint subcommittee (i) vote against the

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59 recommendation and (ii) vote for the recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the
60 joint subcommittee.

61 The joint subcommittee shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2004, and the chairman shall
62 submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and
63 recommendations no later than the first day of the 2005 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The
64 executive summary shall state whether the joint subcommittee intends to submit to the General
65 Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a document.
66 The executive summary and the report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division
67 of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be
68 posted on the General Assembly's website.

69 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint
70 Rules Committee. The Committee may approve or disapprove expenditures for this study, extend or
71 delay the period for the conduct of the study, or authorize additional meetings during the 2004 interim.