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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled November 17, 2003

Proposing an amendment to Section 6 of Article II of the Constitution of Virginia, relating to districts for the House of Representatives and General Assembly and the establishment of the Virginia Redistricting Commission.

Patron—Morgan

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, a majority of the members elected to each house agreeing, That the following amendment to the Constitution of Virginia be, and the same hereby is, proposed and referred to the General Assembly at its first regular session held after the next general election of members of the House of Delegates for its concurrence in conformity with the provisions of Section 1 of Article XII of the Constitution of Virginia, namely:

Amend Section 6 of Article II of the Constitution of Virginia as follows:

ARTICLE II

FRANCHISE AND OFFICERS

Section 6. ~~Apportionment~~ *Districts for the House of Representatives and General Assembly; the Virginia Redistricting Commission.*

(a) Members of the House of Representatives of the United States and members of the Senate and of the House of Delegates of the General Assembly shall be elected from electoral districts established by the ~~General Assembly~~ *Virginia Redistricting Commission*. Every electoral district shall be composed of contiguous and compact territory and shall be so constituted as to give, as nearly as is practicable, representation in proportion to the population of the district. ~~The General Assembly shall reapportion the Commonwealth into electoral districts in accordance with this section in the year 1971 and every ten years thereafter.~~

~~Any such reapportionment law shall take effect immediately and not be subject to the limitations contained in Article IV, Section 13, of this Constitution.~~

(b) *After the next and every subsequent decennial census of the United States, the districts for the House of Representatives, Senate, and House of Delegates shall be established, and the members of the House of Representatives, Senate, and House of Delegates shall be apportioned among the districts, respectively, by the Virginia Redistricting Commission. The Commission shall consist of thirteen members, none of whom shall be a member or employee of the Congress of the United States or of the General Assembly. The members of the Commission shall be appointed with due consideration to geographic diversity and in the manner provided herein.*

(c) *There first shall be appointed twelve members as follows:*

(1) *Two members to be appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate;*

(2) *Two members to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates;*

(3) *Two members to be appointed by the leader in the Senate of the political party holding the most seats in the Senate other than the political party of the President pro tempore;*

(4) *Two members to be appointed by the leader in the House of Delegates of the political party holding the most seats in the House of Delegates, other than the political party of the Speaker; and*

(5) *Four members, two to be appointed by the chairman of the state committee of the political party whose candidate for the office of Governor received the largest number of votes at the most recent gubernatorial election and two to be appointed by the chairman of the state committee of the political party whose candidate for the office of Governor received the next largest number of votes in that election.*

Appointments to the Commission under this subsection shall be made on or before August 15 of the year in which such census is taken and shall be certified to the Secretary of the Commonwealth on or before September 1 of that year. Each partisan delegation so appointed shall appoint one of its members as its chairman who shall have authority to make such certifications and to perform such other tasks as the members of that delegation shall reasonably require.

(d) *There then shall be appointed one member, to serve as an independent member, who shall have been for the preceding five years a resident of the Commonwealth, but who shall not during that period have held public or political party office in the Commonwealth. The independent member shall be appointed upon the vote of at least seven of the previously appointed members of the Commission on or before October 1 of the year in which the census is taken, and those members shall certify that*

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59 appointment to the Secretary of the Commonwealth on or before October 5 of that year. If the
60 previously appointed members are unable to appoint an independent member within the time allowed
61 therefor, they shall so certify to the Supreme Court not later than that October 5 and shall include in
62 that certification the names of the two persons who, in the members' final vote upon the appointment of
63 the independent member, received the greatest number of votes. Not later than November 1 following
64 receipt of that certification, the Supreme Court shall by majority vote of its full authorized membership
65 select, of the two persons so named, the one more qualified by education and occupational experience,
66 by prior public service in government or otherwise, and by demonstrated ability to represent the best
67 interest of the people of the Commonwealth, to be the independent member. The Court shall certify that
68 selection to the Secretary of the Commonwealth not later than the following November 5.

69 (e) Vacancies in the membership of the Commission occurring prior to the certification by the
70 Commission of the districts for the House of Representatives, Senate, and House of Delegates or during
71 any period in which the districts established by the Commission may be or are under challenge in court
72 shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made within five days of their
73 occurrence. In the case of a vacancy in the membership of the independent member, if the other
74 members of the Commission are unable to fill that vacancy within that five-day period, they shall
75 transmit certification of such inability within three days of the expiration of the period to the Supreme
76 Court, which shall select the person to fill the vacancy within five days of receipt of that certification.

77 (f) The independent member shall serve as the chairman of the Commission. The Commission shall
78 meet to organize as soon as may be practicable after certification of the appointment of the independent
79 member, but not later than December 1 of the year in which the census is taken. At the organizational
80 meeting, the members of the Commission shall determine such organizational matters as they deem
81 appropriate. Thereafter, a meeting of the Commission may be called by the chairman or upon the
82 request of seven members, and seven members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum at any
83 meeting thereof for the purpose of taking any action.

84 (g) The Commission, by a majority of the whole number of its members, shall certify the
85 establishment of Senate and House of Delegates districts and the apportionment of members of the
86 Senate and the House of Delegates, respectively, to the Secretary of the Commonwealth within one
87 month of the receipt by the Governor of the official decennial census of the United States for Virginia,
88 or by March 1 of the year following the year in which the census is taken, whichever date is later.

89 (h) The Commission, by a majority of the whole number of its members, shall certify the
90 establishment of House of Representatives districts to the Secretary of the Commonwealth within three
91 months of the receipt by the Governor of the official decennial census of the United States for Virginia,
92 or by June 1 of the year following the year in which the census is taken, whichever date is later.

93 (i) The Commission, convened in an open public meeting and by a majority of the whole number of
94 its members, shall certify the establishment of districts. The Commission shall give at least
95 twenty-four-hours' public notice of the meeting. Any vote by the Commission upon a proposal to certify
96 the establishment of a district plan shall be taken by roll call and shall be recorded, and the vote of any
97 member in favor of any district plan shall nullify any vote which that member shall previously have cast
98 during the life of the Commission in favor of a different district plan. If the Commission is unable to
99 certify the establishment of districts by the time required due to the inability of a plan to achieve seven
100 votes, the two district plans receiving the greatest number of votes, but not fewer than five votes, shall
101 be submitted to the Supreme Court, which shall select and certify whichever of the two plans so
102 submitted conforms most closely to the requirements of this Constitution and the Constitution and laws
103 of the United States.

104 (j) The Commission shall hold at least three public hearings in different parts of the Commonwealth
105 on districts for the House of Representatives, Senate, and House of Delegates. The Commission shall,
106 subject to the constraints of time and convenience, review plans for the establishment of districts
107 submitted by members of the public.

108 (k) Meetings of the Commission shall be held at convenient times and locations. Meetings may be
109 closed to the public with the exception of the public hearings required by subsection (j) of this section
110 and any meeting at which the establishment of districts is certified as prescribed by subsections (g), (h),
111 and (i) of this section.

112 (l) The General Assembly shall appropriate the funds necessary for the efficient operation of the
113 Commission.

114 (m) Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary of this Constitution and except as otherwise
115 required by the Constitution or laws of the United States, no court of the Commonwealth other than the
116 Supreme Court shall have jurisdiction over any judicial proceeding challenging the appointment of
117 members to the Commission, or any action, including the establishment of districts, by the Commission
118 or other public officer or body under the provisions of this section.

119 (n) The districts established for the House of Representatives, Senate, or House of Delegates shall be
120 used thereafter at any general election of members of the House of Representatives, Senate, or House of

121 Delegates, respectively, and shall remain unaltered through the next year ending in zero in which a
122 federal census for the Commonwealth is taken. Members of the House of Representatives, Senate, and
123 House of Delegates in office at the time districts are established by the Commission shall complete their
124 terms of office and continue to represent their districts as constituted at the time of their election to
125 office. Any vacancy occurring in the House of Representatives, Senate, or House of Delegates shall be
126 filled from the district as constituted when the member, whose vacancy is being filled, was elected to
127 office.
128 (o) If a plan certified by the Commission is declared unlawful, the Commission shall reorganize and
129 adopt another district plan in the same manner as herein required and within the period of time
130 prescribed by the court or within such shorter period as may be necessary to ensure that the new plan
131 is effective for the next succeeding primary and general election for all members of the House of
132 Representatives, Senate, or House of Delegates.