

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 75

*Requesting the Virginia Board of Forestry to study the provision of incentives to private landowners to hold and preserve their forestland. Report.*

Agreed to by the Senate, February 17, 2004  
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 9, 2004

WHEREAS, Virginia's forestland covers two-thirds of the Commonwealth's land cover and is one of our most valuable natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the 15 million acres of forestland protect our watersheds, provide food and cover for wildlife, help purify air, provide products for Virginians' daily needs, and afford recreational opportunities for its citizens; and

WHEREAS, almost 80 percent of Virginia's forestland is owned by private individuals and small corporations that invest their resources in providing stewardship of these lands; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's population continues to increase, with development extending further into rural areas, resulting in the loss of forestland as it is converted to other uses; and

WHEREAS, restrictive regulations, escalating real estate taxes, increasing zoning and local ordinances act as disincentives for retaining forestland and open space; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's continued loss of forestland will have an undesirable effect on our environment and economic well-being; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Board of Forestry be requested to study the provision of incentives to private landowners to hold and preserve their forestland.

In conducting its study, the Virginia Board of Forestry shall (i) review laws and programs of other states, localities, and agencies and (ii) seek comments and recommendations from citizens, conservation groups, farm and forest landowner association representatives and forest industry association representatives for the purpose of recommending mechanisms that will provide incentives to private landowners to maintain and preserve their forestland for the environmental and economic benefit of the Commonwealth.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Virginia Board of Forestry by the staff of the Virginia Department of Forestry. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Virginia Board of Forestry for this study, upon request.

The Virginia Board of Forestry shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2004, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and 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 no later than the first day of the 2005 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.