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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 700

Offered January 10, 2007

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*Directing the Joint Commission on Health Care to study Virginia's interdiction laws and the effects of substituting the term "chronic alcoholic" for the term "habitual drunkard." Report.*

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Patron—Hall

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Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, alcoholism and alcohol abuse contribute to many major social, economic and public health problems nationally and in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, according to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, almost 18 million Americans abuse alcohol and more than 100,000 Americans die of alcohol-related causes each year; and

WHEREAS, alcoholism is a major contributor to morbidity and mortality in individuals suffering from mental illness, interfering with the effects of medication and with treatment compliance; and

WHEREAS, Virginia law allows for the interdiction of "habitual drunkards," making it a misdemeanor for any individual to sell alcoholic beverages to such persons; and

WHEREAS, the term "habitual drunkard" is not defined in the Code of Virginia, its meaning is unclear and the term is outdated and unnecessarily pejorative; and

WHEREAS, interdiction is rarely administered, in part due to the unclear definition of the term "habitual drunkard"; and

WHEREAS, there is an increased burden on the justice system caused by the growing number of arrests and the expanding demands of public safety; therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Commission on Health Care be directed to study Virginia's interdiction laws and the effects of substituting the term "chronic alcoholic" for the term "habitual drunkard."

In conducting its study, the Joint Commission on Health Care shall study (i) the system of interdiction currently in place, including practices, procedures, costs and effectiveness of the system, (ii) changes that could be made to the system to increase effectiveness, including the effects of changing the term "habitual drunkard" to "chronic alcoholic," (iii) the need for specialized training of law-enforcement and court personnel to provide interdiction services and associated costs, and (iv) funding, sources of funding, and legislation required to implement the revised system.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Commission on Health Care by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Commission on Health Care for this study, upon request.

The Joint Commission on Health Care shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2007, and for the second year by November 30, 2008, and the Director 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 next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall state whether the Joint Commission on Health Care intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports 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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