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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 383

Offered January 10, 2007

Prefiled January 9, 2007

Recognizing the problems with and implications of the "65 Percent Solution."

Patron—Miller

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—No Child Left Behind—in 2002 to provide greater accountability, choice, and flexibility in ESEA programs, the budgets of local school boards throughout the nation are stressed by rising operating costs; and

WHEREAS, while federally mandated to demonstrate "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) of every student, state and local policy makers and education leaders have also been challenged to maximize public funds appropriated for education to cover the costs of operations, personnel, transportation, improvements to school facilities and technological infrastructure, mandated testing and assessments, procurement of textbooks and instructional materials, special education programs, health care services, special services for English as a Second Language (ESL) and at-risk students, programs and services to increase graduation rates, continuous modifications to curricula, and instructional-related support services, many of which previously were the responsibility of the family and other social institutions; and

WHEREAS, the National Center for Educational Statistics estimates that nationally approximately 61.5 percent of public education operation budgets reach the classroom, and it was determined that the five states with the highest student standardized test scores (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Minnesota, and Connecticut) devote approximately 64.1 percent of their operating budgets to classroom instruction spending; and

WHEREAS, federal guidelines define "classroom instruction spending" as salaries and benefits for teachers and instructional aides; textbooks, computers, and school supplies; arts, music and athletics; and field trips and after-school programs; and "out-of-class spending" as administrative offices and administrators' salaries; transportation, curriculum development and teacher training; salaries for nurses, counselors and librarians; and food services; and

WHEREAS, the "65 Percent Solution" originated with a small advocacy organization whose goal is to urge states to reallocate school spending to ensure that at least 65 cents of every dollar is spent on classroom instruction and teacher salaries, and efforts were made to place the issue on state ballots in 2006 to require public schools to spend at least 65 percent of their operating budgets on classroom expenses or to enact legislation endorsing the plan; and

WHEREAS, advocates indicate that the plan addresses the discontent of taxpayers and teachers concerning the money spent at the classroom level, and that raising the national average to 65 percent would inject nearly \$14 billion into the classroom without raising taxes to enhance learning, purchase classroom computers, and increase qualified staff; and

WHEREAS, opponents state that the plan is punitive, does not take into consideration the great diversity among public schools across the land, and may compromise local control of public schools, divert spending to accomplish political goals through public education, create acrimony among classroom teachers and school administrators, penalize rural and large urban school divisions that depend on school bus transportation or have higher concentrations of students who need specialized services, and make little or no improvement in student test scores; and

WHEREAS, in addition, opponents maintain that the 65 Percent Solution (i) is a politically motivated, rigid one-size-fits-all mandate that creates red tape for schools and acrimony among school personnel, (ii) is a one-time change in the allocation of school resources that will make it harder to increase overall funding for schools in the future and more difficult to resist vouchers, (iii) removes local control, (iv) does not address adequate and equitable funding, (v) does not include funding for school nursing, counseling, libraries, transportation, food service, teacher training and curriculum, administration, and plant operation and maintenance services, (vi) sets a ceiling on the state's obligation to public education, and (vii) may necessitate the privatization of school services; and

WHEREAS, implementation of the 65 Percent Solution in Virginia would exclude funding for essential instructional support services, food service, in-service training for teachers and administrators, school bus transportation, school infrastructure, and plant operation and maintenance services, and decreased funding in these equally important areas will compromise the quality of public education and the future of children; and

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59 WHEREAS, devoting a greater proportion of public education funds to classroom spending arguably
60 will significantly enhance the ability of local school boards to attract qualified teachers and
61 administrators, provide educational support services as needed to promote student academic achievement,
62 and create an atmosphere conducive to learning; however, requiring states to set an arbitrary limit of
63 allocating 65 percent of school budgets on classroom spending may constrain the development of
64 creative and innovative solutions to accomplishing our common goals of a high quality public education
65 for all children, competitiveness in the global marketplace, an educated citizenry, and the commonweal
66 of the citizens of Virginia; and

67 WHEREAS, ensuring that students receive the full benefit of the education tax dollar is a laudable
68 goal and is the objective of policymakers, educators, and taxpayers; however, achieving this end should
69 not be implemented without deliberate forethought that weighs all factors, but should be ambitiously
70 pursued with prudent consideration, with all parties working together, for the future of Virginia's
71 children; and

72 WHEREAS, therefore, implementation of the "65 Percent Solution" in Virginia should be resisted at
73 all governmental levels; now, therefore, be it

74 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly recognize
75 the problems with and implications of the "65 Percent Solution"; and, be it

76 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the
77 Secretary of Education, the president of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Education,
78 the presidents of the Virginia Municipal League, the Virginia Association of Counties, the Virginia
79 School Boards Association, the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, the Virginia Education
80 Association, and the Virginia Parent Teacher Association, requesting that they further disseminate copies
81 of this resolution to their respective constituents in order that they may be apprised of the sense of the
82 General Assembly of Virginia in this matter during their deliberations.