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SENATE BILL NO. 477

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 9, 2008

A BILL to amend and reenact § 3.1-18.10 of the Code of Virginia, relating to state grants to local purchase of development rights programs.

Patron—Hanger

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 3.1-18.10 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 3.1-18.10. Powers and duties of Office of Farmland Preservation.

A. The Office of Farmland Preservation shall have the following powers and duties:

1. To develop, in cooperation with the Department of Business Assistance, the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, the American Farmland Trust, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Virginia Association of Counties, and the Virginia Cooperative Extension, (i) model policies and practices that may be used as a guide to establish local purchase of development rights programs; (ii) criteria for the certification of local purchase of development rights programs as eligible to receive grants, loans or other funds from public sources; and (iii) methods and sources of revenue for allocating funds to localities to purchase agricultural conservation easements;

2. To create programs to educate the public about the importance of farmland preservation to the quality of life in the Commonwealth;

3. To provide technical, professional, and other assistance to farmers on matters related to farmland preservation; and

4. To administer the Virginia Farm Link program established pursuant to § 3.1-18.11.

B. State grants shall be distributed to local purchase of development rights programs under policies, procedures, and guidelines developed by the Office of Farmland Preservation. In general, for each \$1 in grant moneys awarded by the Office, the applicable local purchase of development rights program of the county or city shall be required to provide a \$1 match.

However, if, as of July 1 in the fiscal year, the total "value" of all land in a county or city, but excluding structures, upon which the real estate tax is imposed does not exceed 70 percent of the total fair market value of all land, excluding structures, in the county or city, then for that fiscal year the local purchase of development rights program for the county or city shall be required to match each \$1 awarded by the Office with a match of \$0.50. For purposes herein, "value" shall mean the fair market value of land unless the land has been valued for tax purposes pursuant to Article 4 (§ 58.1-3229 et seq.) of Chapter 32 of Title 58.1, in which case "value" shall mean the value as determined pursuant to such Article. In addition, for purposes of this computation, the data in the most recently published annual report of the Virginia Department of Taxation shall be used.

INTRODUCED

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