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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 313

Offered January 14, 2009

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Establishing a joint subcommittee to study ways to promote and ensure early reading proficiency and comprehension among third graders in the public schools. Report.

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Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, reading is the key to all learning, is the most important skill an individual can acquire, and is essential for economic and social opportunities, particularly in light of the global proliferation of technology and information; and

WHEREAS, according to the Dictionary Project, "reading is the most important skill and many educators view third grade reading as the dividing line between learning to read and reading to learn, and that mastering reading early in life, especially by third grade, is linked to academic success and productivity later in life"; and

WHEREAS, the ability to read enables children to understand and interpret the information and images they receive; contributes to personal empowerment, growth, and enjoyment; builds vocabulary; aids in verbal communication; and provides educational opportunities that can broaden and change lives; and

WHEREAS, reading stimulates the imagination, promotes role play and the development of fine motor skills and eye hand coordination, enhances social skills, and allows children to experience places, things, and events that they are not able to physically explore; and

WHEREAS, national educational research results indicate that "38% of 4th graders nationally cannot read at the basic level, which means they cannot read and understand a simple paragraph from an age-appropriate children's book, and in some school districts this figure rises to over 70%"; and

WHEREAS, serious reading problems impede academic performance through college and are associated with delinquency, drug abuse, unemployment, crime, and other social problems; and

WHEREAS, the more children read, the better they can read and the better their comprehension; children who are good readers experience academic success and have a positive attitude toward learning, and those who read with their families develop a love of reading that lasts a lifetime; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study ways to promote and ensure early reading proficiency and comprehension among third graders in the public schools. The joint subcommittee shall have a total membership of 15 members that shall consist of eight legislative members, six nonlegislative citizen members, and one ex officio member. Members shall be appointed as follows: three members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; five members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; one nonlegislative citizen member who shall represent Smart Beginnings of the Virginia Peninsula; one librarian whose specialty is summer reading programs; one elementary school reading administrator, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; one nonlegislative citizen member who shall represent the Virginia State Reading Association; and two elementary school reading teachers or specialists, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. The Superintendent of Public Instruction or his designee shall serve ex officio with voting privileges. Nonlegislative citizen members of the joint subcommittee shall be citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Unless otherwise approved in writing by the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk, nonlegislative citizen members shall only be reimbursed for travel originating and ending within the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of attending meetings. If a companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required. The joint subcommittee shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership, who shall be members of the General Assembly.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall (i) determine the number of third graders who read at grade level; (ii) rank the school divisions according to the number of third graders who passed the most recent third grade reading test; (iii) identify best practices utilized by school divisions with the highest percentage of third graders who read at grade level; (iv) examine the findings and recommendations of state and national studies pertaining to the efficacy of early reading proficiency and comprehension and its relationship to academic success, and recommend those recommendations

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59 appropriate for implementation in Virginia; and (v) determine strategies to increase the number of third
60 graders who pass the third grade reading test and ways to improve and sustain the early reading
61 proficiency of third grade students.

62 Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the Senate. Legal,
63 research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the joint subcommittee shall be provided by
64 the Division of Legislative Services. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of
65 Education. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee for this
66 study, upon request.

67 The joint subcommittee shall be limited to four meetings for the 2009 interim, and the direct costs of
68 this study shall not exceed \$10,400. Approval for unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require
69 the written authorization of the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk. If a
70 companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall
71 be required.

72 No recommendation of the joint subcommittee shall be adopted if a majority of the House members
73 or a majority of the Senate members appointed to the joint subcommittee (i) vote against the
74 recommendation and (ii) vote for the recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the
75 joint subcommittee.

76 The joint subcommittee shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2009, and the chairman shall
77 submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and
78 recommendations no later than the first day of the 2010 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The
79 executive summary shall state whether the joint subcommittee intends to submit to the General
80 Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or
81 Senate document. The executive summary and the report shall be submitted as provided in the
82 procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents
83 and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

84 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint
85 Rules Committee. The Committee may approve or disapprove expenditures for this study, extend or
86 delay the period for the conduct of the study, or authorize additional meetings during the 2009 interim.