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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 126

Offered January 13, 2010
Prefiled January 13, 2010

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study privatization of all or portions of the Commonwealth's interstate safety rest areas. Report.

Patrons—Nutter, Albo, Anderson, Athey, Carrico, Ebbin, Greason, Iaquinto, Knight, Lingamfelter and Rust

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Referred to Committee on Transportation

WHEREAS, in 2009, the Commonwealth shut down 19 interstate safety rest areas in order to save money; and

WHEREAS, the safety rest areas are a vital safety feature for trucks and travelers in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 44 million visitors use the safety rest areas annually; and

WHEREAS, the safety rest areas represent a significant marketing outlet for tourism businesses, supporting jobs and small businesses in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, the safety rest areas play a significant role in presenting the Commonwealth as a tourism and business destination; and

WHEREAS, closure of the 19 safety rest areas harms the Commonwealth's business-friendly environment; and

WHEREAS, the $8.6 million in proposed savings is more than outweighed by the cost of lost tourism business, lost jobs, harmed perception of the Commonwealth as a business-friendly state, and potential lost lives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study privatization of all or portions of the Commonwealth's interstate safety rest areas.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) shall:

1. Study the Commonwealth's safety rest areas and how they compare with other states' facilities, funding, and management, especially those states similarly situated to Virginia economically and demographically;

2. Study the innovative approaches being used in other states to fund their rest areas with special attention to new innovations in technology, management, and financing;

3. Identify the impediments to privatization, including legislative, institutional, structural, and legal issues, as well as possible areas of opposition, and recommend ways to overcome these barriers;

4. Research and identify institutional, procedural, and legislative options for managing a transition from state ownership of the safety rest areas;

5. Research and identify initial capitalization and operating funding needs and identify options for the bid-letting process;

6. Recommend operational requirements, including management, hours of operation, and maintenance of the safety rest areas;

7. Develop a preference study to survey constituent groups and travelers to identify the features and requirements that will meet the goals of safety, cleanliness, attractiveness, hours of operation, and marketing opportunities for Virginia businesses;

8. Recommend administrative oversight and liaison responsibilities and review procedures for grievances and complaints;

9. Examine existing studies of future traffic growth, highway use, and Virginia Department of Transportation plans to identify opportunities, needs, and requirements for future development of additional safety rest areas in the Commonwealth; and

10. Examine all facets of privatization, including, but not limited to, commercialization, public-private partnerships, and "adoption" by localities.

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

JLARC shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2010, and 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 2011 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether JLARC intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings

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and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate 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 and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.