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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 609

Offered January 9, 2013

Prefiled January 6, 2013

*Requesting the Department of Environmental Quality to study the substances contained in biosolids generated from wastewater treatment facilities that are applied to lands for agricultural purposes. Report.*

Patron—Gilbert

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

WHEREAS, in 1994 a law was enacted to allow biosolids, also referred to as sewage sludge, to be applied to agricultural lands under a permit system; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, the Virginia General Assembly authorized the transfer of all regulatory oversight of treated sewage sludge, commonly known as biosolids, from the Virginia Department of Health to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality; and

WHEREAS, since 2008, biosolids have been land applied in at least 54 localities in the Commonwealth annually; and

WHEREAS, between 2008 and 2011, an average of 228,000 dry tons of biosolids have been spread over an average of 65,000 acres annually; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with House Joint Resolution No. 694, the Secretary of Natural Resources and Secretary of Health and Human Resources convened a panel of experts in 2007 to study the impact of land application of biosolids on human health and the environment; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly posed specific questions to the panel and requested that they consider the typical contaminant concentrations and application rates of biosolids in their responses; and

WHEREAS, the panel included stakeholders from a broad range of disciplines, including medicine, higher education, forestry, agronomy, environmental science, ecology, veterinary medicine, and law; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources and the Secretary of Natural Resources published the final report of the panel in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the panel uncovered no evidence or literature verifying a causal link between biosolids and illness, but recognized gaps in the science and knowledge surrounding this issue; and

WHEREAS, the panel stated these gaps could be reduced through highly controlled epidemiological studies relating to health effects of land applied biosolids and additional efforts to reduce the limitations in quantifying all the chemical and biological constituents in biosolids; and

WHEREAS, the panel stated there are gaps in the research to characterize the composition, fate, and effects of pharmaceutical and personal care products and other persistent organic compounds in biosolids, as well as in other products, materials, and the environment; and

WHEREAS, House Joint Resolution No. 694 also directed the panel to perform a detailed analysis of the chemical and biological composition of biosolids; and

WHEREAS, the vast number of constituents of biosolids combined with the specialized analytical methodologies to detect and quantify these constituents involves significant cost; and

WHEREAS, the panel was limited by resource constraints in performing a detailed analysis of the chemical and biological constituents of biosolids because no funding was available to conduct new analyses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Environmental Quality be requested to study the substances contained in biosolids generated from wastewater treatment facilities that are applied to lands for agricultural purposes.

In conducting its study, the Department of Environmental Quality shall determine whether the constituents of biosolids pose a threat to human health and the environment.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Department of Environmental Quality by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department of Environmental Quality for this study, upon request.

The Department of Environmental Quality shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2013, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings 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 no later than the first day of the 2014 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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