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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 542

Offered January 14, 2015

Prefiled December 30, 2014

Requesting the Department of Historic Resources to study the issues related to the identification, preservation, and maintenance of sites where enslaved persons are buried. Report.

Patrons—Marshall, R.G. and Berg

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth provides for memorializing and protecting certain graves and cemeteries of Confederate veterans of the American Civil War as well as the graves of veterans of the Revolutionary War; and

WHEREAS, provisions covering the care and maintenance of these sites are found in §§ 10.1-2211 and 10.1-2211.1 of the Code of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, no similar provision now exists in Virginia law for the recognition, restoration, and maintenance of the burial grounds and graves of enslaved persons whose lives and labor were essential to Virginia's agricultural and industrial growth and prosperity prior to the end of the Civil War in 1865; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Historic Resources be requested to study the issues related to the identification, preservation, and maintenance of sites where enslaved persons are buried. In conducting its study, the Department of Historic Resources shall (i) compile a list of sites containing documented graves of enslaved persons, (ii) recommend a procedure for adding future discoveries of documented grave sites to the list, and (iii) recommend a program to restore and preserve such sites, including the role of public and private entities in such site restoration and preservation efforts.

Technical assistance may be provided to the Department of Historic Resources by Preservation Virginia, local historical, genealogical, and benevolent societies, and such other organizations that may register an interest with the Department of Historic Resources. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department of Historic Resources for this study, upon request.

The Department of Historic Resources shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2015, 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 2016 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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