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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 623

Offered January 14, 2015

Prefiled January 13, 2015

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study Virginia's management of groundwater resources. Report.

Patron—Hodges

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Article XI, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia states that it shall be the policy of the Commonwealth to conserve, develop, and utilize its natural resources and protect its waters for the benefit, enjoyment, and general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has reported potential risk to the water supply, including groundwater, given changes in population and demand for water for industrial, recreational, and residential use; and

WHEREAS, recent withdrawals of groundwater in eastern Virginia may have contributed to topographical and hydrological changes, including lower water tables and land subsidence, and higher risk of saltwater contamination of groundwater; and

WHEREAS, DEQ has appropriated approximately \$40 million annually for water protection functions, including planning, permitting, and compliance; 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 Virginia's management of groundwater resources.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) shall (i) assess the extent to which groundwater consumption is unsustainable, the potential effects of any unsustainable consumption, and the risk of overconsumption in the future; (ii) assess the effectiveness of state and local water resource planning, particularly with regard to groundwater, including the role state and local plans play in water withdrawal permitting; (iii) examine the adequacy of current funding and staffing levels for managing Virginia's water resources; (iv) consider the need for strategies and practices to preserve or increase the amount of groundwater available for future consumption; and (v) review any other issues and make recommendations as appropriate.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission by DEQ, the State Water Control Board, and the State Department of Health. All agencies of the Commonwealth, local governments, and water resource authorities shall provide assistance to JLARC for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2015, and the chairman 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 2016 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor 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 and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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