

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 62

Continuing the joint committee of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and the Senate Committee on Rules to study staffing levels and employment conditions at the Department of Corrections. Report.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 9, 2015

WHEREAS, Senate Resolution No. 34 (2014) directed the joint committee of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and the Senate Committee on Rules to study staffing levels and employment conditions at the Department of Corrections; and

WHEREAS, it is the mission of the Virginia Department of Corrections to enhance public safety by providing effective programs and reentry services for, and supervision of, sentenced offenders in a humane, cost-efficient manner, consistent with sound correctional principles and constitutional standards; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Corrections aspires to be recognized as a model correctional agency and a proven innovative leader in the field; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth will be a safer place to live and work if the Department provides appropriate custody and supervision of, and programs and reentry practices for, offenders through its exemplary services; and

WHEREAS, the cornerstone of the Department is its employees, who embrace a common purpose and a commitment to the highest professional standards and excellence in public service; and

WHEREAS, the Department should maintain a responsible commitment to its employees and be a satisfying, rewarding, and safe place to work and grow professionally; and

WHEREAS, adequate staffing is critical to the Department's ability to fulfill its mission; and

WHEREAS, inadequate staffing levels can lead to lapses in safety and can place employees under extreme stress and at risk of other negative effects on their health; and

WHEREAS, an insufficient number of staff members or inadequate compensation for employees leads to rapid turnover, resulting in a lack of seasoned and experienced staff; and

WHEREAS, the joint committee of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and the Senate Committee on Rules recommends continuing this study of staffing levels and employment conditions at the Department of Corrections for an additional year to adequately explore and address the issues facing the Department; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate of Virginia, That the joint committee of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and the Senate Committee on Rules study of staffing levels and employment conditions at the Department of Corrections be continued.

In conducting its study, the joint committee shall examine the adequacy of staffing levels, employee health and safety, training practices, turnover rates, and compensation at the correctional facilities of the Commonwealth. The joint committee shall have a total membership of nine members that shall consist of five legislative members and four nonlegislative citizen members. Members shall be appointed as follows: three members of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules upon the recommendation of the Chair of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services; two members of the Senate Committee on Rules to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; and four nonlegislative citizen members to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, of whom two shall be representatives of an association for correctional officers or employees and two shall be former correctional officers or employees. Nonlegislative citizen members of the joint committee shall be citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The current members of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and members of the Senate Committee on Rules shall continue to serve until replaced. Vacancies shall be filled by the original appointing authority. Unless otherwise approved in writing by the chairman of the joint committee and the Clerk of the Senate, nonlegislative citizen members shall only be reimbursed for travel originating and ending within the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of attending meetings. The joint committee shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership, who shall be members of the Senate of Virginia.

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

The joint committee shall be limited to four meetings to conduct this study during the 2015 interim,

ENROLLED

SR62ER

and the direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$14,200 without approval as set out in this resolution. Approval for unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require the written authorization of the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and the Clerk of the Senate.

The joint committee shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2015, and the chairman of the joint committee 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 committee intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a 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; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the provisions of this resolution continuing the joint committee of the Senate Committee on Rehabilitation and Social Services and the Senate Committee on Rules is contingent upon an appropriation effectuating the purposes of this resolution being included in a general appropriation act passed in 2015 by the General Assembly that becomes law.