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HOUSE BILL NO. 1337

Offered January 21, 2016

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 15.2-2903 of the Code of Virginia, relating to local fiscal stress.*

Patron—James

Referred to Committee on Counties, Cities and Towns

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 15.2-2903 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 15.2-2903. General powers and duties of Commission.**

The Commission shall have the following general powers and duties:

1. To make regulations, including rules of procedure for the conducting of hearings;
2. To keep a record of its proceedings and to be responsible for the custody and preservation of its papers and documents;
3. To serve as a mediator between localities;
4. To investigate, analyze, and make findings of fact, as directed by law, as to the probable effect on the people residing in any area of the Commonwealth of any proposed action in that area:
 - a. To annex territory,
 - b. To have an area declared immune from annexation,
 - c. To establish a town or independent city,
 - d. To settle or adjust boundaries between localities,
 - e. To make a transition from city status to town status,
 - f. To make a transition from a county to a city,
 - g. To consolidate two or more localities, at least one of which is a county, into a city, or
 - h. To enter into economic growth-sharing agreements among localities;
5. To conduct investigations, analyses and determinations, in the sole discretion of the Commission, for the guidance of localities in the conduct of their affairs upon the request of such localities;
6. To receive from all agencies, as defined in § 2.2-128, assessments of all mandates imposed on localities administered by such agencies. The assessments shall be conducted on a schedule to be set by the Commission, with the approval of the Governor and the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, provided that the assessments shall not be required to be performed more than once every four years. The purpose of the assessments shall be to determine which mandates, if any, may be altered or eliminated. If an assessment reveals that such mandates may be altered or eliminated without interruption of local service delivery and without undue threat to the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the Commonwealth, the Commission shall so advise the Governor and the General Assembly;
7. To prepare and annually update a catalog of state and federal mandates imposed on localities including, where available, a summary of the fiscal impact on localities of all new mandates. All departments, agencies of government, and localities are directed to make available such information and assistance as the Commission may request in maintaining the catalog;
8. At the direction of the Governor, to assist a five-member task force appointed by the Governor to review state mandates imposed on localities and to recommend temporary suspension or permanent repeal of such mandates, or any other action, as appropriate. *In making its recommendations, the task force shall consider the measure for Fiscal Stress published by the Commission on Local Government of the Department of Housing and Community Development and the impact of such fiscal stress upon the ability of certain localities to meet state mandates. In addition to its other responsibilities, the task force shall consider and recommend possible state incentives to encourage those localities that are designated by the Commission on Local Government as having above average fiscal stress to take actions or adopt procedures that may help alleviate such fiscal stress.* The Governor shall have all necessary authority granted under § 2.2-113, or any other provision of law, to implement the task force recommendations or may recommend legislation to the General Assembly as needed. The task force shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor and shall serve without compensation. The task force may include city or town managers, county administrators, members of local governing bodies and members of appointed or elected school boards. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request. The provisions of this subdivision shall expire July 1, 2018; and
9. To perform such other duties as may be imposed upon it, from time to time, by law.

INTRODUCED

HB1337