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**SENATE BILL NO. 206**

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled January 5, 2016

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Article 4 of Chapter 40 of Title 2.2 a section numbered 2.2-4024.2, relating to the Administrative Process Act; ex parte communications.*

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Patron—Edwards

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Referred to Committee on General Laws and Technology

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Article 4 of Chapter 40 of Title 2.2 a section numbered 2.2-4024.2 as follows:**

**§ 2.2-4024.2. Ex parte communications.**

A. *Except as otherwise provided in this section, while a formal hearing conducted in accordance with § 2.2-4020 is pending, the hearing officer shall not communicate with any person concerning the hearing without notice and opportunity for all parties to participate in the communication.*

B. *A hearing officer may communicate about a pending formal hearing conducted in accordance with § 2.2-4020 with any person if the communication is authorized by law or concerns an uncontested procedural issue. A hearing officer may communicate with any person on ministerial matters about a pending formal hearing conducted in accordance with § 2.2-4020 if the communication does not augment, diminish, or modify the evidence in the record.*

C. *If a hearing officer makes or receives a communication prohibited by this section, the hearing officer shall make a part of the hearing record: (i) a copy of the communication or, if it is not written, a memorandum containing the substance of the communication; (ii) the response thereto; and (iii) the identity of the person who made the communication.*

D. *If a communication prohibited by this section is made, the hearing officer shall notify all parties of the prohibited communication and permit the parties to respond not later than 15 days after the notice is given. For good cause, the hearing officer may permit additional evidence in response to the prohibited communication.*

E. *If necessary to eliminate any prejudicial effect of a communication made that is prohibited by this section, a hearing officer may (i) be disqualified under § 2.2-4024.1; (ii) seal the parts of the record pertaining to the communication by protective order; or (iii) grant other appropriate relief, including an adverse ruling on the merits of the case.*

INTRODUCED

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