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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 37

Offered January 13, 2016

Prefiled January 4, 2016

Encouraging employers in the Commonwealth to pay their employees a living wage.

Patrons—Lucas; Delegate: Heretick

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, there is an ongoing discussion in many areas of the Commonwealth regarding the struggle low-income working families face as they try to survive in an era of rising costs of living and stagnant wages; and

WHEREAS, much of this discussion has centered on the extent to which a gap exists between the minimum wage and the amount of money needed to cover basic family expenses, including the costs of food, housing, transportation, child care, and health care and federal, state, and local taxes; and

WHEREAS, the number of bills introduced in the 2015 Session of the General Assembly seeking to increase the minimum wage illustrates a growing recognition of a need to address the fact that employees compensated at the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour are often unable to earn wages sufficient to cover basic family expenses; and

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has developed a living wage calculator, which may be accessed at <http://livingwage.mit.edu/>, to estimate the cost of living in many communities around the nation, including over 120 localities and nine metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) in the Commonwealth, as well as the state as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the calculator lists typical expenses, the living wage, and typical wages for the selected locality, MSA, or state; and

WHEREAS, the MIT calculator reveals that the living wage, expressed as the hourly rate that individuals must earn to support their family if they are the sole provider and are working full time for 2,080 hours per year, in the Commonwealth for a family of two adults and two children is \$24.91 per hour; and

WHEREAS, the MIT calculator further shows that the living wage varies among the Commonwealth's localities, as would be expected in a state where housing costs and other living expenses vary widely; and

WHEREAS, the MIT calculator provides public and private employers in localities throughout the Commonwealth with information about the hourly wage that would be required in order to provide full-time employees with a living wage; and

WHEREAS, paying a living wage to each employee in the Commonwealth, based on the data accessible through the MIT calculator, will allow workers to sustain themselves and their families and lessen their reliance on public assistance programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That employers in the Commonwealth be encouraged to pay their employees a living wage; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Governor, requesting that he further disseminate copies of this resolution to all local governing bodies and that such entities further disseminate copies of this resolution to the private employers within their respective localities so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

INTRODUCED

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