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SENATE BILL NO. 361

Offered January 8, 2020

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Directing the Joint Commission on Technology and Science to study the safety, quality of life, and economic consequences of weather and climate-related events on coastal areas in Virginia. Report.

Patron—Cosgrove

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has thousands of miles of shoreline, including the tidal portions of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, stretching 7,213 miles; and

WHEREAS, the sea level rose approximately six inches in the last 26 years or about an inch every four years when adjusting for the effect of ground subsidence; and

WHEREAS, state and local governments, the private sector, and individual citizens have spent or are planning to spend significant resources on projects related to sea-level rise and flooding; and

WHEREAS, the data that is required to inform and appropriately direct such spending is technically complex and liable to be accidentally or intentionally misinterpreted; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Joint Commission on Technology and Science (the Commission) be directed to study the safety, quality of life, and economic consequences of weather and climate-related events on coastal areas in Virginia.

In conducting its study, the Commission shall examine (i) the negative impacts of weather, and geological and climate-related events, including displacement, economic loss, and damage to health or infrastructure; (ii) the area or areas and the number of citizens affected by such impacts; (iii) the frequency or probability and the time dimensions, including near-term, medium-term, and long-term probabilities of such impacts; (iv) alternative actions available to remedy or mitigate such impacts and their expected cost; (v) the degree of certainty that each of these impacts and alternative actions may reliably be known; and (vi) the technical resources available, either in state or otherwise, to effect such alternative actions and improve our knowledge of their effectiveness and cost.

The Office of the Clerk of the Senate shall provide administrative staff support. The Division of Legislative Services shall provide legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the Commission. Technical assistance shall be provided to the Commission by the Secretary of Natural Resources. The Commission shall accept any scientific and technical assistance provided by the nonpartisan, volunteer Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission for this study, upon request.

The Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2020, 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 2021 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the 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.