

2021 SESSION

INTRODUCED

21101402D

HOUSE BILL NO. 2108

Offered January 13, 2021

Prefiled January 12, 2021

Establishing a joint committee for the purpose of determining rules to govern the conduct of business of the General Assembly by electronic means.

Patron—Fariss

Referred to Committee on Rules

Whereas, in its 400-year history, the Virginia General Assembly has been governed by rules requiring and establishing procedures for members to convene in a physical location; and

Whereas, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rules of the House of Delegates and the Rules of the Senate have not provided for either chamber, their standing committees, or their subcommittees to convene without a quorum physically assembled; and Article IV, Section 6 of the Constitution of Virginia provides that, in a regular session, "Neither house shall, without the consent of the other, adjourn to another place, nor for more than three days"; and

Whereas, the COVID-19 pandemic forced expeditious adoption of procedures to allow the business of the General Assembly to be conducted remotely by electronic means during the 2020 Special Session I and the 2021 Session of the General Assembly; and

Whereas, in the remaining months of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the pandemic's wake, electronic meetings will likely remain prevalent as a means to conduct business; and

Whereas, in order for the General Assembly to conduct its business and continue to consider a high volume of legislation in future legislative sessions, its members must formulate and agree upon rules of order governing electronic proceedings and accounting for contingencies that arise when conducting meetings by electronic means to ensure that the business of the Commonwealth is conducted effectively and fairly; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *That a joint committee be established for the purpose of determining rules to govern the conduct of business of the General Assembly by electronic means. The joint committee shall have a total membership of eight legislative members, consisting of four members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and four members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. The joint committee shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its members.*

In conducting its work, the joint committee shall consider (i) the efficacy of procedures implemented in the 2020 Special Session I and the 2021 Session of the General Assembly for the conduct of business by electronic means, (ii) the extent to which business of the General Assembly may reasonably be conducted electronically in future legislative sessions, and (iii) amendments to the Rules of the House of Delegates and the Rules of the Senate to establish clear and consistent procedures for the conduct of business by electronic means.

Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates. Legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the committee shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Services.

The joint committee shall be limited to four meetings for the 2021 interim. The joint committee shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2021, and the chairman shall submit to the General Assembly a summary of its recommendations no later than December 15, 2021.

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