

2021 SPECIAL SESSION I

ENROLLED

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 529

Commending the Reforestation of Timberlands program.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2021

WHEREAS, well-managed forests benefit Virginia's economy, communities, and wildlife and contribute to good air, water, and soil quality; and

WHEREAS, sixty-two percent of the Commonwealth, totaling 16 million acres, is forested, and the Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's forests provide an overall economic output of more than \$21 billion annually, and more than 108,000 Virginians are employed in forestry, forest products, and related industries; and

WHEREAS, the sustainability of these resources, as well as the forest industry itself, begins with reforestation efforts; and

WHEREAS, the 1967 forest survey indicated that pine forests were being harvested at a greater rate than growth, and in 1970, the forest industry, landowners, and state leaders came together to formulate a strategy to address these concerns; and

WHEREAS, as a result of these efforts, the Reforestation of Timberlands Act, widely known simply as "RT," was adopted in 1970 and reenacted in 1971; and

WHEREAS, the Reforestation of Timberlands program is administered by the Virginia Department of Forestry and supported by contributions from the forest industry and matching general funds that provide cost-sharing to private forest landowners for planting and improving pine forests; and

WHEREAS, the forest industry, through the Forest Products Tax, has supported the Reforestation of Timberlands program's success by contributing more than \$56 million since July 1, 1971; and

WHEREAS, more than two million acres of land have been reforested or improved, and more than 52,000 landowners have participated in the Reforestation of Timberlands program, resulting in pine growth that has exceeded harvest in each forest survey since 1977; and

WHEREAS, the Reforestation of Timberlands Act is a success story that established a vision and template for managing Virginia's hardwood forests and has served as a model for similar cost-share programs across the nation; and

WHEREAS, the longevity of the Reforestation of Timberlands program is a testament to the program's achievements in sustainability, and the 50th anniversary of the program should be celebrated throughout the Commonwealth because of the natural, economic, and health benefits for all Virginians resulting from stable, sustainable, well-managed forests; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Reforestation of Timberlands program hereby be commended for its essential role in managing the Commonwealth's third-largest industry while protecting air and water quality for all Virginians on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the program's creation; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Rob Farrell, state forester and director of the Virginia Department of Forestry, as an expression of the House of Delegates' profound admiration for the meritorious efforts of the agency's staff and the importance of the Reforestation of Timberlands program.

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