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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 291

Offered January 25, 1994

Establishing a Sustainable Development Task Force.

Patrons—Brickley, Armstrong and Phillips

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia seeks both to promote economic development as well as protect its environment and natural resources, and

WHEREAS, many areas of the Commonwealth, including rural areas, are facing serious economic hardships, including job losses, unemployment, poverty, outmigration of young people and other adverse socioeconomic conditions; and

WHEREAS, many of these same areas have significant environmental resources, including outstanding examples of ecosystems; significant habitat for plants and animals; relatively pristine rivers, lakes and estuaries; prime farmlands; excellent air quality; and other natural resource values; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's rich and diverse natural resources offer potential for sustained contributions to the economic vitality and quality of life for urban as well as rural residents; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that small companies (i.e. fewer than 20 employees) have created more than 60 percent of new employment in rural communities; that expansion of existing local firms has created the largest source of net employment, and that economic diversification is critical to the long term economic and ecological health of rural communities; and

WHEREAS, the term "sustainable development" describes economic development which protects environmental resources, and which is characterized by local communities which are diverse, productive and adaptable; and

WHEREAS, citizen-based sustainable development initiatives in the Commonwealth have shown good promise for success, including the work of the Northampton Economic Forum on Virginia's Eastern Shore, the Clinch-Powell Sustainable Development Forum in southwestern Virginia, and emerging citizen initiatives in Albemarle County and the Lower Rappahannock Valley; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia has laid a foundation to promote sustainable development, including: The Commission Studying Capital Financing Needs of Small Business in Virginia, which developed recommendations for locally-based and environmentally-health economic development; the House Joint Resolution No. 653 from the 1993 session, which encouraged the Commonwealth to prepare a strategic plan for sustainable development; the Department for Housing and Community Development's Center for Rural Development (CORD) support including ????? enterprise development programs for community-based sustainable development planning initiatives; and work by Old Dominion University's Entrepreneurial Center with The Nature Conservancy in developing plans for sustainable business ventures; and

WHEREAS, private foundations have indicated willingness to support statewide planning initiatives for sustainable development; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That

1. A Sustainable Development Task Force (Task Force) shall be appointed to assess current sustainable development initiatives in the Commonwealth and other areas, to develop a statewide strategic plan for sustainable development, and to recommend actions which should be taken by the state, local governments, citizen groups and nonprofit organizations, especially in rural areas of the Commonwealth.

2. The Task Force shall comprise 15 members, including 5 appointed by the Speaker, 3 by the Senate, and 7 by the Governor, including representation from local government, community-based organizations (including representatives from the Virginia Eastern Shore and far southwestern Virginia, and nonprofit economic development and environmental conservation organizations. The Secretary of Commerce and Trade and Secretary of Natural Resources shall serve ex officio. The Task Force shall elect its Chair. All members of the Task Force should have experience of knowledge to the subject area.

3. The Task Force shall issue a report to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 1994. The report shall include findings, recommended goals, action goals, action strategies, and measures of success.

4. The Task Force shall conduct its business and hold meetings as determined by the Chair. Information, assistance and funding for experiences for the Task Force shall be provided, as may be necessary, by the Department of Housing and Community Development, as well as other sources including nonprofit organizations.

INTRODUCED

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