

1994 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 291

Establishing a sustainable development task force.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 10, 1994

Agreed to by the Senate, March 8, 1994

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

WHEREAS, many areas of the Commonwealth, including rural areas, are facing serious economic hardship, including job losses, unemployment, poverty, migration 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 habitats for plants and animals; pristine rivers, lakes and estuaries; prime farmlands; and excellent air quality; and

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

WHEREAS, studies have shown that small companies with 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 that are diverse, productive and adaptable; and

WHEREAS, citizen-based sustainable development initiatives in the Commonwealth, including the work of the Northampton Economic Forum on Virginia's Eastern Shore, the Clinch-Powell Sustainable Development Forum in southwestern Virginia, and an emerging citizen initiative in the Lower Rappahannock Valley, and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Sustainability Council in Piedmont have shown good promise for success; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has laid a foundation to promote sustainable development through various studies and programs such as the Commission Studying Capital Financing Needs of Small Business in Virginia, which proposed recommendations to encourage locally based environmental health and economic development; a strategic plan for sustainable development proposed in House Joint Resolution No. 653 (1993); support for community-based sustainable development planning initiatives, including microenterprise development programs by the Center for Rural Development of the Department for Housing and Community Development; and developmental plans for sustainable business ventures by the Entrepreneurial Center of Old Dominion University in conjunction with The Nature Conservancy; 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 a task force be established to study sustainable development. The task force shall be composed of eighteen members to be appointed as follows: six members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; four members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and six citizens to be appointed by the Governor, who shall be representatives of local government, community-based organizations, the Virginia Eastern Shore, far southwestern Virginia, Piedmont Virginia, and nonprofit economic development and environmental conservation organizations. The Secretaries of Commerce and Trade and Natural Resources shall serve as nonvoting ex officio members. The task force shall assess current sustainable development initiatives in the Commonwealth and other areas, develop a statewide strategic plan for sustainable development, and recommend appropriate actions which state and local governments, citizen groups, and nonprofit organizations, especially in rural areas of the Commonwealth, might consider for implementation.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$10,500.

The task force shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1995 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the study.

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