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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 276

Offered January 25, 1994

Requesting the Department of Information and Technology, in conjunction with the Division of Legislative Automated Systems, to study the feasibility of implementing computerized public access of legislative information.

Patrons—Darner; Senator: Calhoun

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the smooth functioning of democracy depends largely on the ability of citizens to monitor the actions of their elected representatives to ensure accountability; and

WHEREAS, the public should be informed to the fullest extent possible as to the time, place, and agenda for each meeting of the houses and committees of the General Assembly and information regarding the outcome of these proceedings; and

WHEREAS, while government is best served by an electorate that is knowledgeable about important public issues, staying well-informed about the rapid economic, social, cultural, and environmental changes is increasingly difficult; and

WHEREAS, keeping abreast of the status of legislative initiatives has become increasingly difficult as the number of introduced bills has climbed, but the length of sessions has remained the same; and

WHEREAS, California law requires that the Legislative Counsel, with the advice of Assembly Committee on Rules and the Senate Committee on Rules, makes available to the public, by means of access by computer network, specified information concerning bills, the proceedings of the houses and committee of the legislature, statutory enactments, and the California Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Virginia citizens should have a single source for timely and complete information about the on-going work of legislative committees and the General Assembly during each session; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Information and Technology, in conjunction with the Division of Legislative Automated Systems, be requested to study the feasibility of implementing computerized public access of legislative information. The Department shall include in its study, but not be limited to; (i) a survey of computerized public access of legislative information in other states; (ii) a public opinion poll to sample potential user interests; (iii) a review of the current subscriber bill tracking system in Virginia to determine the adequacy of the information for the use by a wider audience; (iv) an estimate of the costs of providing public access of legislative information to either central locations, such as public libraries, or to individuals upon request; (v) a proposal that balances public interest needs with the cost of providing information.

The Department is requested to hold an appropriate number of public hearings to solicit comments from public citizen groups and concerned citizens regarding the format and type of information to be made available.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall, upon request, assist the Department in the conduct of its study.

The Department shall submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1995 Session of the General Assembly in accordance with the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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