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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 196
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
(Proposed by the House Committee on Rules
on February 9, 1996)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Bennett)

Establishing the Virginia Commission on the Future of Public Education.

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's commitment to public education is evidenced in the Virginia Constitution, as the Bill of Rights notes that "free government rests, as does all progress, upon the broadest possible diffusion of knowledge, and that the Commonwealth should avail itself of those talents which nature has sown so liberally among its people by assuring the opportunity for their fullest development by an effective system of education throughout the Commonwealth"; and

WHEREAS, excellence in public education continues to be a top priority for the Commonwealth, as scholars have noted that there is no object of government which Virginians would see as more fundamental and of more continuing concern than education; and

WHEREAS, alarming dropout rates and increasing numbers of unskilled graduates ill-prepared to enter the work force, escalating school violence, and declining student test scores have prompted education leaders to call for systemic change in the way teaching and learning are practiced in the nation's elementary and secondary schools, and to call for educational standards and school reform that will ensure educational excellence for the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, the anticipation of increased social and economic demands and the formidable task of competing in a global economy in the twenty-first century emphasize the need for an educated citizenry in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the leaders of Virginia's business and industrial communities have indicated that the economic and social well-being of the Commonwealth demands a strong educational system to sustain a skilled workforce that will enable Virginia to compete in global markets; and

WHEREAS, the infrastructure of the public schools system, access to modern computer technology and the needs of master teachers in Virginia's local school divisions require improvement and enhancements to enable them to take full advantage of available state and local educational and telecommunications technology resources; and

WHEREAS, state and local revenues may be insufficient to meet current educational and technological needs, anticipated growth in school enrollments, and a heightened demand for accountability to ensure an educated citizenry in the coming millennium; and

WHEREAS, the public schools are an integral part of the education continuum to prepare students to enter the workplace and to pursue advanced study in Virginia's colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, because implementation of the revised Standards of Learning significantly strengthens academic standards, it is essential that a concerted effort be made to determine and provide the curriculum, materials, and related assessments to ensure that students acquire and are able to apply the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the next century; and

WHEREAS, although some ongoing programs, such as Governor's Schools, collaborative school improvement planning initiatives, a variety of open enrollment policies, magnet and special emphasis schools, alternative and night schools, and dual enrollment programs support innovation in public education; further study is needed to identify any barriers in the present system of public education that inhibit innovation and reform; and

WHEREAS, ensuring educational excellence in Virginia is contingent upon the shared rights and responsibilities of students, parents, and educators for the maintenance of a safe, productive learning atmosphere and for an unwavering commitment to the highest academic goals; and

WHEREAS, in pursuing creative solutions to various educational and administrative challenges, a number of states have grappled with school finance reform, and many have also explored initiatives such as school choice, vouchers, site-based management, school performance assessments, and teacher empowerment; and

WHEREAS, promoting innovation and reform in public education in the Commonwealth requires careful examination of constitutional and statutory education standards that apply to all public schools, the constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the General Assembly and the Board of Education, the supervisory authority of local school boards, state education requirements that may currently be waived, and existing mechanisms for flexibility and reform in public education; and

WHEREAS, the United States, including the Commonwealth, has the shortest school day and year of any industrial nation in the world, and some experts contend that the current school year does not afford ample time to equip young Virginians with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in an increasingly competitive and global workplace; and

60 WHEREAS, the length of the school year in the Commonwealth is currently 180 teaching days, or
61 990 hours, and Basic Aid funds for public education in the Commonwealth are based on the length of
62 the school term; and

63 WHEREAS, although the Virginia Department of Education, in its 1993 report (House Document
64 No. 69), recommended delaying any increase in the school year until various issues, such as funding and
65 educational and program standards, could be resolved, it nonetheless concluded that the time needed for
66 mastery of skills "must equate with the time scheduled for instruction if all students are to achieve the
67 goals of readiness for living and working in the twenty-first century"; and

68 WHEREAS, given the challenges and demands of the 21st century, maintaining a system of high
69 quality public education requires vision, strategic planning, and specific measurable goals; and

70 WHEREAS, the mission of public education should be reconsidered and a consensus among all
71 concerned parties regarding the mission should be achieved to adequately prepare Virginia's children for
72 the decade ahead; now, therefore, be it

73 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia Commission on the
74 Future of Public Education be established. The Commission shall be composed of twenty-four members
75 to be appointed as follows: four members of the House of Delegates; the Chairmen of the House
76 Committees on Education, Appropriations, and Finance, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House;
77 three members of the Senate; the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health; one
78 co-chairman of the Senate Committee of Finance, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on
79 Privileges and Elections; the Lieutenant Governor; the President Pro Tempore of the Senate; and seven
80 citizens who have been recognized for their distinguished leadership and contributions in the fields of
81 public education and public service to the Commonwealth or the nation and business, four of whom
82 shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House and three of whom shall be appointed by the Senate
83 Committee on Privileges and Elections. The Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System, the
84 Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Director of the State Council of Higher Education shall
85 serve ex officio without voting privileges.

86 The Commission shall develop a vision for public education, reconsider the mission and purpose of
87 public education with the view towards developing a consensus in Virginia as to what the mission
88 should be, and recommend a strategic plan for accomplishing the vision and mission of public
89 education, which shall include, but not be limited to determining the following:

90 1. Feasible innovations for implementing the revised Standards of Learning to enhance students'
91 preparation for future learning and work;

92 2. Current and future workforce skills and knowledge needed by high school graduates in the
93 workplace, as well as curriculum and instructional materials and educational technology needs;

94 3. The value, efficacy, and desirability of implementing applied learning and teaching methods which
95 use manipulatives in instruction to assist students in learning and acquiring necessary knowledge and
96 skills;

97 4. Collaborative initiatives with institutions of higher education for augmenting instruction, and
98 providing teacher training, teaching strategies and methodologies, and pre-service and in-service
99 preparation and training, with particular attention given to teacher training needed to assist students in
100 applying concepts and transferring skills;

101 5. Organizational patterns, management, efficiency, and costs of public schools, the public school
102 infrastructure, incentives and rewards to school divisions that successfully meet state requirements, and
103 whose students attain or maintain high academic achievement;

104 6. Correlation of the objectives of the revised Standards of Learning with the competencies needed
105 for success in employment and postsecondary education, and business and industry linkages and
106 partnerships;

107 7. Parental involvement, student learning styles, educational alternatives and choices of students for
108 career preparation;

109 8. Institutional, administrative, legal and regulatory barriers to teaching and student learning;
110 innovations, improvement, reform; and funding needed to enable public schools to meet the vision and
111 mission of public education;

112 9. Statutes that support flexibility, existing mechanisms for obtaining waivers from certain state
113 education regulations, recent legislative and executive branch studies and actions addressing innovation
114 and flexibility in public education;

115 10. An examination of student academic achievement in the public schools, and consideration of
116 study rights and responsibilities for learning in the Commonwealth's public schools;

117 11. A review of reform proposals in the Commonwealth and reform efforts in other states;

118 12. Consideration of the constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the General Assembly and the
119 Board of Education, the supervisory authority of local school boards;

120 13. A review of the standards for public education in the Commonwealth, including the Standards of
121 Quality, recent revisions to the Standards of Learning and provisions for the accountability of schools

for pupil performance; development and enforcement of student conduct policies, as required by Standard 7 of the Standards of Quality; alternative education options for disruptive students and ways to promote consistency in enforcement of student conduct codes; and

14. The efficacy and appropriateness of lengthening the school year, including an examination of research and data regarding the length of the school term and student achievement; the impact of lengthening the school year on school administration, transportation, personnel, and facilities, and on family lifestyles and schedules; alternatives such as summer programs and extended school days; the propriety of increasing teacher working days, and such other issues as the Commission deems appropriate.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$ 34,500. An estimated \$1,000 is allocated for materials. Such expenses shall be funded from the operational budget of the Clerk of the House of Delegates.

The Commission shall employ such staff as it deems necessary from such funds as may be appropriated for this purpose. Technical assistance shall be provided by the staffs of the Division of Legislative Services, the House Committee on Appropriations, the Senate Committee on Finance, the Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education, and the Virginia Community College System.

The Commission may establish a technical advisory committee which shall be composed of persons with expertise in public and higher education, business and industry, workforce training, economic development, and teacher training. Such persons shall include, but not be limited to, parents; students; teachers; school administrators; division superintendents; representatives of business and industry; college faculty, staff, and administrators; citizens; and community leaders. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

The Commission shall submit an interim report to the Governor and the 1997 General Assembly, and shall complete its work in time to submit its final findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1998 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing 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.