

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 221

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the future of Virginia's environment.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 9, 1996

Agreed to by the Senate, March 9, 1996

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and a history of appreciation on the part of her citizens for those resources; and

WHEREAS, Virginians have expressed their clear and thoughtful view that the resources of the Commonwealth are important to the current generation and should be maintained and enhanced to ensure enjoyment and utilization by generations to come; and

WHEREAS, public opinion surveys of Virginians show overwhelming support for the protection of clean air and pure water, and the conservation of natural resources; and

WHEREAS, these same surveys show strong support for the protection of open spaces, natural areas, and state parks; and

WHEREAS, Virginians recently voted overwhelmingly for the bond issue to acquire and maintain areas for parks and natural areas; and

WHEREAS, Virginians express virtual unanimity in their support for economic development that does not degrade the environment; and

WHEREAS, it has been a decade since the Commonwealth's environmental protection and natural resource agencies were assembled into a single secretariat for purposes of coordinating the state's role in natural resource management; and

WHEREAS, during the past decade, there has been an ongoing reorganization and transfer of resource management programs, including proposals now before the current session of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the result of those reorganizations has created uncertainty and unpredictability in the Commonwealth's approach to resource management; and

WHEREAS, an examination of the trends in financing environmental programs and of the state's commitment to its natural resource management programs indicates that there has been a significant decline in state general fund dollars appropriated for natural resource programs and a corresponding reliance on federal dollars, user fees, and permit fees; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of this Commonwealth desire a more certain and definitive course for protecting, enhancing, and investing in the natural resources of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the Commonwealth to articulate a vision and plan for the future with regard to the protection, enhancement, and utilization of our natural resources; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the future of Virginia's environment. The joint subcommittee shall examine the history of environmental and natural resources programs and the budgetary trends for resource management programs and shall develop a long-term vision and plan for the future management of Virginia's natural resources. The joint subcommittee may also consider such issues as innovative approaches used in other states, integrated environmental strategies, and effective environmental negotiation mechanisms.

The joint subcommittee shall be composed of 17 members as follows: 5 members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; 4 members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and 7 citizen members, 4 to be appointed by the Speaker of the House and 3 to be appointed by Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. The Secretary of Natural Resources, or her designee, shall serve as a nonvoting ex officio member.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$19,500.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee, upon request.

The joint subcommittee shall complete its work in time to submit its 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 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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