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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 48
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
on February 12, 1996)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Earley)

Establishing a select committee of the Senate Committee on Rules and the House Committee on Rules to study the feasibility of developing a public affairs network to provide television coverage of the General Assembly and other government proceedings.

WHEREAS, Article I, Section 2 of the Virginia Constitution holds "That all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people..."; 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, 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, because the majority of Virginians, like most Americans, rely on television as their principal source of news and information, the lack of readily accessible programming can lead to voter apathy; and

WHEREAS, in 1979 the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) began to distribute gavel-to-gavel coverage of the United States House of Representatives via satellite to cable television systems nationwide, and today has expanded to bring coverage of the United States Senate through C-SPAN2; and

WHEREAS, a number of states, including California, Pennsylvania, and Texas, have successfully instituted public affairs broadcasting systems to televise legislative sessions, press conferences, meetings of city councils and county boards of supervisors, election coverage, and special programs to provide in-depth analysis of significant issues; and

WHEREAS, televised coverage of proceedings of the Senate and House of Delegates would enhance representative government by providing citizens of the Commonwealth a unique educational resource with broad access to timely information on the General Assembly; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a select committee of the Senate Committee on Rules and the House Committee on Rules be established to study the feasibility of developing a public affairs network in Virginia to televise coverage of the General Assembly and other government proceedings. The select committee shall include in its study, but not be limited to, (i) a survey of public affairs coverage in Virginia and other states, (ii) a public opinion poll to sample potential viewer interest in gavel-to-gavel coverage, and (iii) an implementation plan for providing enhanced public affairs programming in Virginia. The select committee shall consist of 18 members as follows: four members of the Senate Rules Committee to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; six members of the House Rules Committee to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; the Director of the Department of Information Technology or his designee; a representative of the Virginia Public Telecommunications Board and one citizen member, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; one representative of a Virginia-based noncommercial, educational television station and two citizen members, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; the Senate Clerk or her designee; and the House Clerk or his designee. Appointments shall be bipartisan with equal representation from both the majority and minority parties. The subcommittee shall elect a chairman from among its legislative members and shall work in consultation with the public telecommunications organizations in Virginia.

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

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$8,750.

The select committee shall submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1997 Session of the General Assembly in accordance with 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 or delay the period for the conduct of the study.