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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 68

Offered January 22, 1996

Requesting that the Director of the Department of Information Technology, in cooperation with the State Librarian and the State Archivist, study the feasibility of and costs associated with requiring public bodies to compile indices of certain computer databases.

Patrons—Houck, Marye and Woods

Referred to the Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the General Assembly enacted the Virginia Freedom of Information Act in 1968 to ensure the people of this Commonwealth ready access to the official records of public bodies of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act is designed to prevent the affairs of government from being conducted in an atmosphere of secrecy; and

WHEREAS, the public is to be the beneficiary of any action taken at any level of government; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act is to be liberally construed so as to promote an increased awareness by all persons of governmental activities and to afford every opportunity to citizens to witness the operations of government; and

WHEREAS, any exemption or exception from the Virginia Freedom of Information Act is to be narrowly construed in order that no thing which should be public may be hidden from any person; and

WHEREAS, an increasing number of official records of the public bodies of the Commonwealth are created and maintained within computer databases; and

WHEREAS, in keeping with the policy behind the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, the public has a right to know about the existence of such computer databases and the official records that may be contained therein; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Director of the Department of Information Technology, in cooperation with the State Librarian and the State Archivist, be requested to study the feasibility of and costs associated with requiring public bodies to compile, and annually update, an index of computer databases maintained or created by them before, on, or after July 1, 1997. "Computer database" means a structured collection of data or documents residing in a database management program or spreadsheet software. Such indices shall include, at a minimum, the following information with respect to each database listed therein: a list of data fields, a description of the format or record layout, information as to the frequency with which the database is updated, a list of any data fields to which public access is restricted, a description of each form in which the database can be copied or reproduced using the public body's computer facilities, and a schedule of fees for the production of copies in each available form.

The Department of Information Technology shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Library of Virginia. Upon request, all agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the study.

The study shall be completed in time to submit a report of findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1997 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing legislative documents.

INTRODUCED

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