

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 76

Directing the Virginia Commission on the Future of Public Education to study the efficacy and appropriateness of establishing full-time regional vocational high schools and an institute of industrial arts in the Commonwealth.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 4, 1996

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 29, 1996

WHEREAS, the development of a skilled, educated workforce is essential to the future growth and prosperity of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, in a global economy dominated by high productivity, advanced technology, and intense competition, it is imperative that educational opportunities for Virginia be based on the "underlying assumption . . . that every student can be educated to be a productive worker in a high wage, high skill society"; and

WHEREAS, designed to provide students with specific, marketable job skills, vocational education has enjoyed renewed focus and respect after witnessing declining enrollments nationally since 1984; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the diverse interests, talents, and educational needs of the Commonwealth's young people, the General Assembly has directed local school boards, pursuant to the Standards of Quality, to provide "competency-based vocational education programs, which integrate academic outcomes, career guidance and job-seeking skills for all secondary students . . . that reflect employment opportunities, labor market needs, applied basic skills, job-seeking skills, and career guidance"; and

WHEREAS, the Standards of Quality also require local school boards to provide academic and vocational preparation for students who plan to continue their education beyond secondary school or who plan to enter employment; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education, as the state agency designated to carry out the provisions of the federal Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, is statutorily directed to promote and administer the provision of agriculture, business, marketing, home economics, health, technology, trade and industrial education in the public middle and high schools, regional schools, postsecondary institutions, and certain institutions for youth and adults; and

WHEREAS, through their statutory authority to operate joint schools, 35 school divisions participate in regional vocational education centers that may not only supplement courses offered in high schools but also permit participating school divisions to offer a wider range of programs; and

WHEREAS, while the missions of these centers are consistent with the vocational education services mandated by the Standards of Quality, a full-time, regional vocational high school, combining the expertise and experience of educators and business leaders, might provide increased opportunities for creativity and innovation in the delivery of vocational education; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's system of higher education, comprised of two-year and four-year institutions, provides a variety of degree programs and opportunities for continuing education and professional development; and

WHEREAS, while the diverse missions of these institutions encompass education, research, and economic and community development, there are certain student populations whose vocational and professional training needs cannot be met by these institutions; and

WHEREAS, the creation of a regional institute for industrial arts, combining the expertise and experience of educators and business leaders, might offer a curriculum specifically designed to provide the professional and vocational training necessary to produce a skilled workforce and to attract business and industry to the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Commission on the Future of Public Education be directed to study the efficacy and appropriateness of establishing full-time regional vocational high schools and an institute of industrial arts in the Commonwealth. The Commission shall consider, among other things, the need for specific vocational, technical, and professional training and the types of curricula and degrees regional vocational schools and an institute of industrial arts should offer; the location, governance, and funding of such schools and institute; ways to facilitate partnerships between the public and private sectors in creating and operating such schools and institute; creative methods of incorporating the education and experience of craftsmen, business leaders, engineers, technicians, and others in the delivery of instruction; similar regional or special schools in other states; and such other issues as it deems appropriate.

The Commission shall include, pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 196 (1996), its findings and recommendations on these matters in an interim report to the Governor and the 1997 Session of the General Assembly and in its final report 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.