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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 390

Offered January 8, 1997

Prefiled December 10, 1996

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the General Assembly's constituent services.

Patron—McEachin

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, close communication between state legislators and their constituents is essential to the functioning of a representative government; and

WHEREAS, constituents in Virginia may contact their legislators directly by mail, telephone, fax, and in a number of cases, by E-mail and the internet; and

WHEREAS, an 800 number operated jointly by the offices of the House and Senate Clerks during the sessions of the General Assembly has enabled over 20,000 constituents each session to register and forward their viewpoints on issues and pending legislation to their representatives; and

WHEREAS, members of the General Assembly may respond to constituent inquiries individually or tailor their correspondence to reach their constituency at large through the use of newsletters, television and radio broadcasts, and internet homepages; and

WHEREAS, each house has adopted certain rules, policies, and procedures regarding the breadth of constituent services that are supported with state funds; and

WHEREAS, even though the rapid expansion of electronic communication has created new opportunities for legislators and constituents to exchange information faster and more efficiently, it has also created concerns regarding accountability and confidentiality; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive review of constituent services offered in other states would be beneficial in assessing and determining the appropriate level of services in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the General Assembly's constituent services. The joint subcommittee shall be composed of five members, which shall include five legislative members as follows: three members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker and two members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall examine the current rules, procedures, policies, and limitations governing constituent services in Virginia. The joint subcommittee shall also examine current and innovative constituent services in other state legislatures and the level of state support for such services.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$3,750.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Offices of the House and Senate Clerks. 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.

INTRODUCED

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