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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 567

Offered January 20, 1997

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the voter registration process.

Patrons—Scott, Connally, Melvin and Van Landingham; Senator: Gartlan

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

WHEREAS, the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, commonly referred to as the "Motor Voter" law, is designed to increase voter registration and participation among eligible citizens; and

WHEREAS, the major provisions of the act, applicable to federal elections, provide for motor vehicle registration, agency registration, mail registration, record keeping and reporting requirements, and administrative procedures for the removal of ineligible voters from voting on the rolls; and

WHEREAS, in 1994 and 1996, Virginia voters approved two constitutional amendments to enable Virginia to conform its registration procedures for state and local elections to the new federal law by allowing for mail registration and providing for the continued registration of nonvoters and certain voters who have moved within the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly passed comprehensive legislation effective on March 6, 1996, which implemented the federal act and these constitutional changes; and

WHEREAS, one million new registrants are expected to be added to the Virginia voter rolls within the next five years through these new voter registration procedures; and

WHEREAS, by the 1996 November election, Virginia voter rolls had climbed by almost 10 percent with the addition of 290,000 registered voters; and

WHEREAS, even with this modest increase in registrations, a significant number of otherwise eligible voters failed to become registered in time to vote in that election; and

WHEREAS, a higher than expected number of voter registration applications were lost in the mail or returned with inaccurate, inconsistent, or missing information; and

WHEREAS, many citizens of the Commonwealth continue to experience difficulty in filling out the new voter registration forms, do not completely understand how the motor voter registration works, or may be in need of further assistance from those agencies offering voter registration opportunities; and

WHEREAS, a review of the new voter registration laws, procedures, and application forms will enable the Commonwealth to evaluate the implementation of the National Voter Registration Act in Virginia and the need for modifications to make the process more efficient and easier for Virginia citizens to understand; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the voter registration process. The joint subcommittee shall be composed of the nine legislative members as follows: five members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, and four members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. Of these nine members, eight shall be former members of the Joint Subcommittee Studying Ways to Improve the Registration and Electoral Process and Encourage Voter Participation pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 532 (1993) and House Joint Resolution No. 30 (1994).

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall evaluate the effectiveness of voter registration procedures established to implement the National Voter Registration Act in Virginia and examine the impact these procedures have on other areas of election law. During its deliberations, the study shall seek input from citizens on how to improve the registration process to ensure that all eligible voters are afforded the greatest opportunity to become registered.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$ 6,750.

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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