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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 573

Offered January 20, 1997

*Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the impact of industrial hog production in Virginia.*

Patrons—Van Yahres, Abbitt, Bennett, Clement, Councill, Davies, Deeds, Grayson, Jones, J.C., McEachin, Orrock, Ruff, Spruill, Thomas and Wilkins; Senators: Couric, Gartlan, Lucas, Marye, Miller, Y.B. and Waddell

Referred to Committee on Agriculture

WHEREAS, agriculture is central to the economy of Virginia, contributing more than \$11 billion to Virginia's Gross State Product; and

WHEREAS, the independently-owned family farm, with its ability to grow a diversity of crops, is the foundation of the agriculture industry; and

WHEREAS, the local economy benefits greatly from these small family farms that plow their profits back into the local communities through purchases and taxes paid to the local and state governments; and

WHEREAS, corporately-owned, industrial-scale hog production in North Carolina has doubled since 1989, driving two-thirds of the independent family farms out of business; and

WHEREAS, the number of family-owned hog farms in Virginia has plummeted from 14,000 in 1984 to 2,100 in 1995, due largely to modern mechanization; and

WHEREAS, the monoculture of industrial hog production poses serious threats to the environment, public health, and economy in rural areas in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, industrial hog production in North Carolina and other states has led, in some instances, to the contamination of groundwater, and thus threatened the drinking water supply of many rural families; and

WHEREAS, industrial hog production in North Carolina necessitates the creation of waste lagoons, which have spilled more than 25 million gallons of untreated hog feces and urine into surface waters, resulting in a significant threat to water quality and the killing of millions of fish and other aquatic life; and

WHEREAS, these spills and other incidents caused North Carolina to issue health advisories to recreational and commercial users of rivers, and has damaged the state's tourism industry; and

WHEREAS, as a result of these incidents, state legislators in North and South Carolina have passed legislation to ensure that industrial hog operations are conducted in a manner that protects the rural quality of life, the public health, and groundwater and surface water supplies; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth, without proper safeguards at least consistent with neighboring states, is vulnerable to the rapid and uncontrolled expansion of the swine industry; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the impact of industrial hog production in Virginia. The joint subcommittee shall be composed of 11 members, which shall include six legislative members and five nonlegislative citizen members as follows: four members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; two members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; three citizen members, one of whom shall be a small farmer, one of whom shall be a representative of an environmental organization, and one of whom shall be a representative of local government, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; and two citizen members, one of whom shall be a director of a soil and water conservation district and one of whom shall be a representative of a sports fishing organization, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall examine:

1. The costs and benefits of promoting industrial hog production rather than independent businesses engaged in hog farming;

2. The impact of industrial hog production on Virginia's efforts to promote agricultural diversification among small farms, and on tourism; and

3. The safeguards needed to ensure that Virginia's regulations to protect groundwater and surface water, and to provide sufficient buffers between these operations and neighboring farms and residential areas, are no less restrictive than those adopted in North Carolina and South Carolina.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$5,600

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

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**60** to the Governor and the 1998 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the  
**61** Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.  
**62** Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint  
**63** Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the  
**64** study.