

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA -- 1997 SESSION

ENROLLED

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 592

Directing the State Water Commission, with the assistance of the Virginia Water Resources Research Center at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, to study for two years innovative technologies and other options for providing safe, reliable, and affordable domestic water supplies to individual households and small communities in southwestern Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 20, 1997

Agreed to by the Senate, February 19, 1997

WHEREAS, a safe, reliable, and affordable supply of drinking water should be available to all Virginians; and

WHEREAS, according to a recent study, Water Supply in the Virginia Coalfield Counties: Status, Technical Options, Assessing Rate Impacts, "water supply is especially important in the southwest Virginia coalfield counties, where surface and groundwater resources are limited, where community water supplies do not serve most rural households, and where private wells and springs have been impacted by resource extraction industries and agriculture"; and

WHEREAS, in 1990 fewer than one-half of the households in the coalfield region were served by public water systems; and

WHEREAS, water is so precious to this region that existing supplies should be preserved by water conservation techniques and source protection, including watershed, well head, and spring management; and

WHEREAS, recent testing data found E. Coli contamination and unacceptably high levels of iron, manganese, sodium, sulfates, and chlorides in many of the household wells and springs; and

WHEREAS, treatment cost for individual households to remove such contaminants as iron and sulfur can exceed fifty dollars per month, and even with such treatment the quality of the domestic water is at best marginal; and

WHEREAS, groundwater as a water source is not only a concern from a water quality standpoint, but local groundwater sources are also unreliable because of poor water-bearing aquifers and their susceptibility to drought, and because of land use impacts; and

WHEREAS, the most conventional alternative for providing public water supplies to these unserved households and small communities is extending water lines from existing surface water systems; and

WHEREAS, such extensions can be prohibitively expensive because of distance and terrain; and

WHEREAS, unconventional sources such as coal seam aquifers and mine cavities, along with emerging collection and storage technologies such as rainwater harvesting, represent possible alternatives for meeting the drinking water needs of the small communities in southwestern Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the State Water Commission, with the assistance of the Virginia Water Resources Research Center at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, be directed to study for two years innovative technologies and other options for providing safe, reliable, and affordable domestic water supplies to individual households and small communities in southwestern Virginia. The study shall consider such innovative technologies as water harvesting and cistern storage, small surface reservoirs, and cost-effective treatment, including the development of small package-system models.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the State Water Commission for this study, upon request.

The State Water Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1999 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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