

1997 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 619

Offered January 20, 1997

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study discrimination, in lending and other practices, against African-American farmers in the Commonwealth.

Patron—McEachin

Referred to Committee on Agriculture

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture has acknowledged that discrimination has occurred in response to requests by African-American farmers seeking federal aid and services; and

WHEREAS, this discrimination may have been the cause of or contributed to African-American farmers unjustly losing their farms or facing foreclosure; and

WHEREAS, African-American family farmers throughout the country are vanishing at a rate almost five times faster than other family farmers, and federal programs designed to help them flourish are actually helping to drive them out; and

WHEREAS, African-American farmers make up three percent of all farmers in Virginia, yet hold thirteen percent of the delinquent loans; and

WHEREAS, the federal Farm Bill of 1996 ended a "lease-back/buy-back" program that allowed farmers to lease their foreclosed farms and buy them back when they raised enough money, taking away many farms that had been operated for generations by African-American farmers; and

WHEREAS, discrimination of any type will not be tolerated in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study discrimination, in lending and other practices, against African-American farmers in the Commonwealth. The joint subcommittee shall be composed of ten members as follows: five members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, four members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, and the Lieutenant Governor or his designee.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall (i) determine the nature and scope of discrimination against African-American farmers in the Commonwealth, (ii) determine if any other unique needs of African American farmers are being denied, and (iii) develop recommendations and solutions that will enable the long tradition of African American farmers in the Commonwealth to continue farming productively.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$4050.

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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