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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 283

Offered January 17, 1997

*Expressing the policy of the Commonwealth that tuition rates for in-state students at public institutions of higher education must be reduced.*

Patrons—Edwards, Bolling, Colgan, Hawkins, Houck, Lambert, Lucas, Marsh, Marye, Maxwell, Newman, Norment, Potts, Quayle, Reasor, Reynolds, Schrock, Stosch, Ticer, Trumbo, Waddell, Wampler, Whipple, Williams and Woods; Delegates: Armstrong, Behm, Bennett, Christian, Cranwell, Davies, Johnson, Jones, J.C., McEachin, Melvin, Phillips, Plum and Putney

Referred to the Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, in order to remain competitive with the institutions in our neighboring states, Virginia's public colleges and universities must be affordable for the citizens of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the fiscal exigencies of the early 1990's made it necessary to reduce the budgets for the Virginia public institutions of higher education; and

WHEREAS, throughout this period of financial crises, the Virginia public institutions of higher education maintained their excellence while restructuring their administration and offerings; and

WHEREAS, the public institutions of higher education were, however, forced to increase their tuition and fees in order to remain viable and productive through this period of economic difficulties; and

WHEREAS, tuition charged by Virginia's public colleges and universities, as a result of these increases, is among the highest average tuition in the nation, while state support per student is among the lowest in the nation; and

WHEREAS, in Virginia, high tuition charges are of recent vintage, corresponding with the precipitous decline in the Commonwealth's support for higher education during the recession of the early 1990's; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's traditional tuition and revenue fee policy provided 70 percent of the costs of in-state students' higher education; and

WHEREAS, presently, Virginia supports its citizens with only 50 percent of the costs of their public higher education; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Virginia, Article 1, Section 15, notes that "free government rests, as does all progress, upon the broadest possible diffusion of knowledge"; and

WHEREAS, high tuition is an impediment to students' ambitions and opportunities, a disincentive for students to apply to college, and is a factor which makes Virginia less attractive to business and industry; and

WHEREAS, particularly among low- and middle-income students, the costs of public higher education in Virginia are difficult to assume; and

WHEREAS, students have become increasingly saddled with ever-greater student loans and are incurring high debt in order to attend college, with a resulting disadvantage upon entering the world of work; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the policy of the Commonwealth shall be to reduce in-state tuition rates by 10 percent per year for each of the next four years in order to ensure the "diffusion of knowledge" among Virginia's citizens; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Commonwealth must return to a tuition and revenue fee policy of funding, on average, at least 70 percent of the costs of higher education for in-state students enrolled in Virginia's public colleges and universities.

INTRODUCED

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