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SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 29

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
on February 17, 1997)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Hanger)

Establishing a select committee to study on-farm sales of agricultural products.

WHEREAS, it is the declared policy of the Commonwealth to conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural land for the production of food and other agricultural products and to promote economic growth in rural Virginia compatible with its cultural, natural, and economic environments; and

WHEREAS, small family-operated farms are in particular need of protection because economic pressures, agricultural marketing practices and regulations and other factors have led to a decline in their numbers in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, there is an increasing demand from consumers for fresh, locally produced agricultural products, and this demand is creating economic opportunities for Virginia's family farmers; and

WHEREAS, laws designed to protect the public health and safety prevent farmers from selling certain products directly to consumers; and

WHEREAS, such laws may be more restrictive than is necessary to protect public health and safety and may thus be unduly burdensome on small family farmers; and

WHEREAS, it has been suggested that one way to improve the viability of small farms and increase consumer choice in the market place might be to exempt small farming operations from the requirements of certain agricultural laws; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, That a select committee be established to study on-farm sales of agricultural products. The select committee shall consider whether exemptions from agricultural laws should be provided for operators of small farms who wish to sell food or other agricultural products directly from their farms to consumers. The select committee shall also examine other marketing issues that are of concern to operators of small family farms. The select committee shall be composed of three members of the Senate, two of whom shall be members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, all to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections.

In conducting the study, the select committee shall seek the participation of family farmers, agricultural associations, consumers, public health officials, and interested members of the House of Delegates.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$ 4,500.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the select committee, upon request.

The select committee 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.