

# 1998 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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## SENATE BILL NO. 250

Offered January 16, 1998

*A BILL to designate the steps of the State Capitol of the Commonwealth as a limited public forum.*

Patron—Barry

Referred to the Committee on Rules

Whereas, the right of all citizens within the Commonwealth of Virginia to exercise the freedoms of religion, speech, and expression is guaranteed under the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States; and

Whereas, the Virginia State Capitol is a public building in which citizens, lobbyists, legislators, and tourists have gathered since the founding of the Commonwealth to debate great political questions affecting every facet of life; and

Whereas, the steps of the State Capitol constitute an ideal place to establish a limited public forum for the display of exhibits that will allow citizens to express the freedoms of religion, speech, and expression more completely; and

Whereas, the Joint Rules Committee has refused to adopt regulations designating an area of the State Capitol as a limited public form for the exhibition of unattended displays by private individuals and groups; and

Whereas, the citizens of the Commonwealth deserve the freedom to enjoy the pursuit of liberty in the public domain of the State Capitol as intended by our Founding Fathers; now, therefore,

### **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. § 1.** *The steps of the State Capitol of the Commonwealth are hereby designated a limited public forum for the exhibition of unattended displays by any person. For purposes of this section, person shall mean any individual, group, business, company, organization, corporation, partnership, association, or government body or entity. The Joint Rules Committee shall adopt reasonable and constitutionally permissible rules regarding the administration of the forum, including time, manner, and place restrictions. The forum shall be open during normal business hours as determined by the Joint Rules Committee. The Joint Rules Committee shall adopt these rules, in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, no later than September 1, 1998.*

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