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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 92

Offered January 23, 1998

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the implications of granting fiscal autonomy to elected school boards in the Commonwealth.

Patrons—Reasor, Couric, Holland, Houck, Ticer and Whipple; Delegates: Barlow, Behm, Dickinson, Thomas and Van Yahres

Referred to the Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the General Assembly in 1992 enacted legislation authorizing local referenda on the direct citizen election of members of school boards; and

WHEREAS, 102 local jurisdictions, following referenda approving such action, have changed from appointed to elected school boards, with the result that two-thirds of local school board members in the Commonwealth have been elected to their positions by popular vote; and

WHEREAS, nationally, approximately 97 percent of school boards are elected, and more than three-quarters of those school boards have fiscal autonomy; and

WHEREAS, fiscal autonomy has taken various forms in other states, with the local real property tax cited as the most important revenue source to school boards in nearly all states; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's method of funding public education, which in accordance with constitutional requirements places control of educational policy with local school boards while requiring the governing bodies of local governments to appropriate funds for educational purposes, is unique; and

WHEREAS, the existing school funding arrangement often puts elected members of the school board at odds with the budgetary and taxing decisions of another elected body elected by the same constituency; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's counties and cities collect billions of dollars annually using local taxing instruments and expend much more for education than is currently required by state law; and

WHEREAS, the prospect of fiscal autonomy for elected school boards poses serious issues for the Commonwealth and local governing bodies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the implications of granting fiscal autonomy to elected school boards in the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to, funding implications for the Commonwealth and its local governments, equity in educational funding, the composite index, budgets, local tax bases, tax rates, the collection of taxes, and debt for school construction.

The joint subcommittee shall be composed of 12 members, which shall include nine legislative members and three nonlegislative citizen members, as follows: four members of the Senate, to include the co-chairmen of the Senate Finance Committee, the chairman of the Senate Education and Health Committee, and one member of the Senate Education and Health Committee, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; five members of the House of Delegates, to include the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, the chairman of the House Finance Committee, the chairman of the House Education Committee, and two members of the House Education Committee, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; one representative of the Virginia Association of Counties, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; one representative of the Virginia Municipal League, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; and one representative of the Virginia School Boards Association, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$6,600.

The Division of Legislative Services, the staff of the House Appropriations Committee, and the staff of the Senate Finance Committee 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 1999 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.

INTRODUCED

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