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HOUSE BILL NO. 1671

Offered January 13, 1999

A BILL to promote the voluntary disclosure and free exchange of Year 2000 readiness information.

Patrons—Nixon, Almand, Byron, Clement, Davis, Dudley, Johnson, Jones, S.C., Landes, McClure, Plum, Purkey, Rhodes and Watts

Referred to Committee on Science and Technology

Whereas, at least thousands and possibly millions of information technology computer systems, software programs, and semiconductors may not be capable of recognizing certain dates after December 31, 1999; may read dates in the Year 2000 and thereafter as if those dates represent the year 1900; or may otherwise fail to accurately process those dates; and

Whereas, this situation, known colloquially and collectively as "the Year 2000 problem," could incapacitate systems that are essential to public safety, economic health, and the delivery of electricity and water, medical care, and numerous other essential goods and services in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the United States, and the world; and

Whereas, reprogramming or replacing affected systems before the Year 2000 problem incapacitates such essential systems is a matter of state, national, and global interest; and

Whereas, the prompt, candid, and thorough disclosure and exchange of information related to the Year 2000 problem would greatly enhance the ability of the public and private sectors to improve their Year 2000 readiness; and

Whereas, improving Year 2000 readiness is a matter of state, national, and global importance and a vital factor in minimizing Year 2000-related disruptions to the health, safety, welfare, and economic well-being of the citizens, businesses, and governments of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the United States, and the world; and

Whereas, massive efforts are underway in the public and private sectors to timely and adequately solve the Year 2000 problem; prepare "mission critical" information technology computer systems, software programs, and semiconductors to recognize the Year 2000; and minimize the risks associated with a Year 2000 failure; and

Whereas, these massive efforts have been impeded because of concern about the potential for legal liability associated with the disclosure and exchange of Year 2000 readiness information; and

Whereas, facilitating the voluntary dissemination and free exchange of Year 2000 readiness information, solutions, best practices, and test results between and among the public and private sectors without undue concern about legal liability is crucial to the ability of the public and private sectors to timely and adequately solve the Year 2000 problem; prepare "mission critical" information technology computer systems, software programs, and semiconductors to recognize the Year 2000; and minimize the risks associated with a Year 2000 failure; and

Whereas, the purpose of this act is to serve the state, national, and global interest in promoting the voluntary dissemination and free exchange of Year 2000 readiness information shared in good faith; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

§ 1. Definitions.

For purposes of this act:

"Disclosure" and "discloses" means disseminating or providing information in good faith related to the Year 2000 problem or a Year 2000 failure without any expectation of or right to remuneration or fees therefor.

"Information" means any projection, estimate, planning document, objective, timetable, best practice, test plan, test date, or test result intended to timely and adequately solve the Year 2000 problem; prepare "mission critical" information technology computer systems, software programs, and semiconductors to recognize the Year 2000; or minimize the risks associated with a Year 2000 failure.

"Person" means the same as defined in § 1-13.19.

"Year 2000 problem" or "Year 2000 failure" means any computing, physical, enterprise, or distribution system complication that has occurred or may occur as a result of the change of the year from 1999 to 2000 in any person's technology system, including, without limitation, computer hardware, programs, software, or systems; embedded chip calculations or embedded systems; firmware; microprocessors; or management systems, business processes, or computing applications that govern, utilize, drive, or depend on the Year 2000 processing capabilities of the person's technology systems. Such complications may include the common computer programming practice of using a two-digit field

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60 to represent a year, resulting in erroneous date calculations; an ambiguous interpretation of the term or
61 field "00"; the failure to recognize 2000 as a leap year; algorithms that use "99" or "00" to activate
62 another function; or the use of any other applications, software, or hardware that are date-sensitive.

63 § 2. "Safe harbor" from legal liability in tort actions.

64 Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any person who discloses information regarding the
65 Year 2000 problem or a Year 2000 failure shall not be liable for damages in any tort action brought
66 against that person regarding such Year 2000 problem or Year 2000 failure for any injury caused by,
67 arising out of, or relating to, the use of the information disclosed, except as provided in § 3.

68 § 3. Exceptions.

69 The provisions of § 2 shall not apply if the claimant proves to the trier of fact by a preponderance of
70 the evidence that:

71 1. The information disclosed was sold, exchanged, or provided for profit by any person, or

72 2. Such information (i) was material and false, inaccurate, or misleading and (ii) was disclosed (a)
73 with the knowledge that the information was false, inaccurate, or misleading; (b) without a statement to
74 the claimant that the disclosure was based on information supplied by another person if the information
75 was a republication of, or otherwise a repetition of, information from such other person or made with
76 the knowledge that the information was false, inaccurate, or misleading; or (c) with gross negligence in
77 the determination of the truth or accuracy of the information or in the determination of whether the
78 information was misleading.

79 § 4. Act not limiting.

80 Nothing in this act shall be deemed to affect any other remedy available to a person against another
81 person with respect to information disclosed about the Year 2000 problem or a Year 2000 failure.

82 **2. That an emergency exists and this act is in force from its passage.**