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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 763

Offered January 21, 1999

Requesting the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to study ways to improve animal care and treatment at pounds and animal shelters.

Patron—Morgan

Referred to Committee on Agriculture

WHEREAS, every county and city in Virginia must maintain or cause to be maintained a pound in accordance with regulatory guidelines issued by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of such pounds and animal shelters is to provide for the care and disposition of stray and unwanted animals; and

WHEREAS, inhumane treatment at pounds and shelters with respect to euthanasia and confinement has been confirmed in numerous jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, inspection of pounds and shelters by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services indicates multiple and chronic problems with attaining compliance with animal welfare laws and the Department's regulatory guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the authority of the Department and other law-enforcement officials to ensure compliance with legal requirements concerning the operation of pounds and shelters is very limited; and

WHEREAS, when different levels of government are involved, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations is more easily accomplished with a cooperative approach; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services be requested to study ways to improve animal care and treatment at pounds and shelters. The study shall include, but not be limited to, consideration of whether the following should be increased: (i) requirements for the training and continuing education of pound and shelter personnel, (ii) the frequency of Department inspections of pounds and shelters, and (iii) the Department's enforcement authority with respect to pounds and shelters. The Department shall establish a task force to assist in its work. The task force shall include representatives of the State Veterinarian, the Virginia Association of Counties, the Virginia Municipal League, the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies, the Virginia Animal Control Officers Association, Save Our Shelters, the Department of Criminal Justice Services, and the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Department for this study, upon request.

The Department shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2000 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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