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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 764

House Amendments in [] — February 9, 1999

Establishing a special task force to study ways in which faith-based community service groups may provide assistance through their programs to meet social needs.

Patrons—McDonnell, Black, Bloxom, Byron, Cantor, Cox, Harris, Katzen, McClure, Nixon, Putney, Wagner, Wardrup and Wilkins; Senators: Colgan, Hanger, Lambert, Martin and Newman

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, since the 1960s, America has spent over five trillion dollars on human service programs; and

WHEREAS, although welfare reform, enacted in Virginia in 1995 through VIP/View, which has the goal of self-sufficiency through work activity and positive assistance to enhance those goals, has begun with great promise and positive initial results, there is still some concern that the system has served instead to entrap many people in a cycle of government dependence; and

WHEREAS, the 1996 federal welfare reform initiative, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), increases the importance of government dependence on charitable and religious organizations to fill the gap in meeting the needs of many current and former recipients of public assistance, many of whom will be losing eligibility in the near future as their time limit expires; and

WHEREAS, the "charitable choice" provision of the federal welfare reform act invites states to utilize private and faith-based organizations in delivering welfare services to the poor and needy and, as a result, religious-based community groups are free to compete for contracts or participate in voucher programs on the same basis as any other nongovernmental provider; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth needs to look for ways to encourage churches, synagogues, and other faith-based groups and organizations to offer child care, job training, mentor programs, and other social services without jeopardizing the religious nature of their mission; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a task force be established to study ways in which faith-based community service groups may provide assistance through their programs to meet social needs. The task force shall be composed of [13] members which shall include legislative members and nonlegislative members as follows: the Lieutenant Governor to serve as chairman; [5] citizens to be appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be named as vice-chairman; three members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; and four members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker [of the House in accordance with the principles of Rule 16 of the House] .

In conducting its study, the task force shall (i) survey the Commonwealth's legal and regulatory landscape to identify obstacles to the participation of faith-based groups in the welfare reform process, (ii) recommend ways Virginia can create an environment in which these groups can be given full opportunity to participate in the delivery of services necessary to make welfare reform a success, and (iii) consider such other matters as the task force may deem appropriate. [The task force shall ensure that all denominational faiths, as express a desire to engage in the study, are provided opportunities to contribute to and participate in the deliberations of the task force.]

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$10,250.

The [Office of the Lieutenant Governor Division of Legislative Services] shall provide staff support for the study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the task force, upon request.

The task force shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations by January 1, 2000, to the Governor and the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing 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.

ENGROSSED

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