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## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 337

Offered January 15, 1999

*Establishing a joint subcommittee to study ways to educate the electorate concerning proposed constitutional amendments.*

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Patron—Hawkins

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Referred to Committee on Rules

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WHEREAS, the Constitution of Virginia requires that any amendment to it must be approved by two separate General Assemblies and then approved by the voters of the Commonwealth before the amendment will be given effect; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this lengthy process is to prevent hasty or uninformed revisions in the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, any amendment to the Constitution should be accompanied by informed debate both in the General Assembly and before the general electorate; and

WHEREAS, voters have expressed dissatisfaction with the information provided about the ten constitutional amendments placed on the November 1996 and 1998 ballots; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth now provides only minimal information to the public about pending constitutional amendments by methods arcane and inadequate: first, by requiring the Clerk of the House of Delegates to send two copies of each proposed amendment to the clerks of the circuit courts who must post one copy on the front door of the courthouse and hold one copy for inspection by the public; and second, by requiring the preparation and limited distribution of a neutral explanation of proposed amendments during the 90 days before the voter referendum on the amendment; and

WHEREAS, the importance of providing information on the content and impact of proposed constitutional amendments and improvements in communications technology make it timely and appropriate to examine ways to educate the public about pending constitutional amendments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study ways to educate the electorate concerning proposed constitutional amendments. The joint subcommittee shall examine methods used by other states to provide voter information on ballot issues.

The joint subcommittee shall be composed of seven members as follows: 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.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$4,200.

Staffing shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Services. 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 2000 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.

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