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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 383

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Rules
on February 2, 1999)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Couric)

Establishing a select committee of the Senate Committee on Transportation and the House Committee on Transportation to study special license plates and the naming of bridges and highways.

WHEREAS, prior to 1995, issuance of new special license plates was sometimes authorized by the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles and sometimes by action of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, during its 1995 Session, the General Assembly enacted legislation vesting the legislature with the exclusive authority to authorize new special license plates; and

WHEREAS, during the same session, the General Assembly approved three bills authorizing 16 new special license plates; and

WHEREAS, during these same four sessions, while some proposals required more than one session to gain approval, the best available data shows that only five proposed new special license plate series were rejected by the General Assembly and never affirmatively reconsidered; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, two bills authorized nine new special license plates, in 1997 three bills authorized 19 new special license plates, and in 1998 19 bills authorized 23 new special license plates — a total of 67 license plates in just four sessions; and

WHEREAS, in recent sessions, the General Assembly has also enacted numerous bills naming bridges and designating highways and certain portions of highways in honor of certain persons; and

WHEREAS, § 33.1-250 of the Code of Virginia provides that "the Commonwealth Transportation Board may, upon the request of any county, town or city, evidenced by a resolution of the governing body thereof, name in honor or memory of a deceased person named in such resolution, any bridge not heretofore named by the Board in pursuance of an act of the General Assembly, in such county, town or city and on any route of a state highway and may place an appropriate marker on such bridge"; and

WHEREAS, although sources vary on the number of special license plate series authorized, owing in part to a lack of agreement on what constitutes a "series," most conservative estimates put the number in excess of 150; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's wide assortment of special license plates affords a means for its citizens to express themselves as individuals, allow the Commonwealth to award tokens of respect to persons with special achievements or distinctions, and provide welcome additional revenues through a form of voluntary taxation; and

WHEREAS, the rapidly growing number of special license plate designs, coupled with the fact that license plates from different series sometimes display the same alpha-numeric characters, poses difficulties for law-enforcement agencies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a select committee of the Senate Committee on Transportation and the House Committee on Transportation be directed be established to study special license plates and the naming of bridges and highways. The select committee shall consists of 12 members as follows: four members of the Senate Committee on Transportation to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; six members of the House Committee on Transportation to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; and the Attorney General of Virginia or his designee and the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles or his designee who shall serve as non-voting members.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the Department of Motor Vehicles. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the select committee, upon request.

The select committee 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.