

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 459

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the need for increased availability of higher education services in South-central Virginia.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 26, 1999

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 26, 1999

WHEREAS, since Colonial days, Virginians have demonstrated a "thirst for knowledge and a reverence for learning," which resulted in the establishment of schools and universities in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Jefferson is credited with developing Virginia's plan for a system of public education, which provided for elementary schools, general or secondary schools, and a university; and

WHEREAS, with the establishment of the College of William and Mary in 1624 by the crown of England, and with the enactment of legislation appropriating funds for the University of Virginia in February 1818, Virginia was well on its way to creating a high quality and effective system of higher education composed of state-supported colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, today, Virginia's system of higher education includes public and private two-year and four-year, comprehensive and doctoral institutions which offer a range of fields and disciplines from the associate degree to the post-doctoral level, and educational opportunities in the professional schools; and

WHEREAS, it has been the long-standing goal of the Commonwealth to ensure that opportunities for higher education are accessible and available to all citizens in the most practicable, feasible, and cost-efficient manner; and

WHEREAS, although the South-central region of the Commonwealth is served by the community college system, there is no comprehensive or doctoral institution or branch campus that can be easily accessed by citizens in the area; and

WHEREAS, increased availability of higher education opportunities in South-central Virginia may facilitate economic development, foster community growth, promote the appreciation of the cultural and historical significance of the region and enhance educational opportunities for all citizens through partnerships with public schools, business, government, and other local, state, and federal entities; and

WHEREAS, the costs of providing improved access to higher education opportunities in South-central Virginia need not be prohibitive, as such educational services could be provided on a regional basis; and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida has explored the regional university concept to provide greater access to college degree programs in its unserved areas, and the design and approach of Florida and other states in this regard should be considered; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study the need for increased availability of higher education services in South-central Virginia. The joint subcommittee shall be composed of 11 members, which shall include 7 legislative members and 4 nonlegislative citizen members as follows: three members of the Senate, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; four members of the House of Delegates, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House in accordance with the provisions of Rule 16 of the Rules of the House of Delegates; and four citizens at large from South-central Virginia, two of whom shall be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections and two of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall review the policies and procedures, if any, for the establishment of colleges, branch campuses and regional higher education centers in the Commonwealth, including accreditation. An analysis of the South-central region shall also be performed to determine the necessity of establishing either a comprehensive or doctoral institution of higher education in the area, opening a branch campus of an existing institution of higher education, or establishing a regional higher education center. Such analysis shall include, but not be limited to, (i) regional demographic characteristics; (ii) the level of education in the region and high school and college graduation rates; (iii) the status of economic development of the South-central region; (iv) the availability of appropriate facilities, space, and grounds for enhanced higher education services; (v) the availability of qualified professors, instructors, administrators, and staff; (vi) the disciplines which will be offered for study; (vii) the types of degrees that will be conferred; (viii) characteristics of the potential pool of students; (ix) the potential costs of and community and local government support for providing increased availability of higher education services; (x) consultation with the State Council of Higher Education, public and private colleges and universities currently serving South-central Virginia or positioned to provide higher education services to South-central Virginia, and other relevant entities; and

(xi) such other issues as may be deemed necessary by the joint subcommittee.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$10,200. An estimated \$1,500 is allocated for materials and resources. Such expenses shall be funded from the operational budget of the Clerk of the Senate.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. Technical assistance shall be provided by the State Council of Higher Education and the staff of the Senate Finance Committee. 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.