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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 65

Offered January 11, 2006

Prefiled January 9, 2006

Requesting the Secretary of Public Safety to study the use of faith-based volunteers in correctional facilities. Report.

Patrons—Saxman and Johnson

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Virginia currently spends approximately \$900 million of taxpayer money in the biennial Department of Corrections budget; and

WHEREAS, more than 90 percent of all those who go to prison return to their communities, many of them unprepared for reintegration due to a lack of ties to the community, substance abuse problems, and limited job training; and

WHEREAS, several states, including Texas, Florida, and Indiana have recently instituted faith-based instructional programs for soon-to-be-released prisoners; and

WHEREAS, inviting faith-based organizations to institute volunteer programs in state correctional facilities could provide a valuable service to the community while saving the state money by reducing recidivism rates; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Secretary of Public Safety be requested to study the use of faith-based volunteers in correctional facilities.

In conducting its study, the Secretary shall examine faith-based prison programs instituted in other states and determine how effective these programs are in preparing prisoners for reintegration and reducing recidivism rates. The study shall examine services offered by faith-based organizations in these states, including parenting and family life classes, anger-management programs, life skills classes, religious instruction, and substance abuse services. The Secretary shall develop recommendations for how faith-based services might be better utilized in state correctional facilities.

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

The Secretary of Public Safety shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2006, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2007 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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