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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 163

Offered January 9, 2008

Prefiled January 9, 2008

Establishing a joint subcommittee to study issues relating to companion animals. Report.

Patron—Saxman

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, there are an estimated 2,784,880 companion animals in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, while owners of companion animals generally strive to provide their pets with appropriate veterinary care and adhere to state and local laws, the occurrence of animal abuse, neglect, and substantial legal noncompliance continues; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services reported that pounds and shelters in the Commonwealth euthanized close to 100,000 of the 230,000 unwanted companion animals passing through those pounds and shelters during 2006; and

WHEREAS, the dangers posed by violent dogs and dogfighting are addressed in the Commonwealth and elsewhere through varied legislative policies including civil and criminal penalties for the owner, a registry for dangerous and vicious dogs, pet owner liability insurance requirements, and tethering limitations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That a joint subcommittee be established to study issues relating to companion animals. The joint subcommittee shall have a total membership of 10 members that shall consist of six legislative members, three nonlegislative citizen members, and one ex officio member. Members shall be appointed as follows: four members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; two members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; two nonlegislative citizen members to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates; and one nonlegislative citizen member to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules. The State Veterinarian or his designee shall serve ex officio with voting privileges. Nonlegislative citizen members of the joint subcommittee shall be citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Unless otherwise approved in writing by the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk, nonlegislative citizen members shall be reimbursed only for travel originating and ending within the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of attending meetings. If a companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required. The joint subcommittee shall elect a chairman and vice chairman from among its membership, who shall be members of the General Assembly.

In conducting its study, the joint subcommittee shall investigate and report on the status of the following issues related to companion animals in the Commonwealth: vaccinations and veterinary medicine; overpopulation and low-cost sterilization programs; regulation of breeding operations; conditions in animal shelters and pounds; the adequacy of existing dangerous animal laws and owner liability insurance; animal welfare and cruelty, including tethering practices; local registration, fee schedules, and fee collection (including the role of veterinary practitioners); and procedures for disaster preparedness.

Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates. Legal, research, policy analysis, and other services as requested by the joint subcommittee shall be provided by the Division of Legislative Services. Technical assistance shall be provided by Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the joint subcommittee for this study, upon request.

The joint subcommittee shall be limited to four meetings for the 2008 interim, and the direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$7,200 without approval as set out in this resolution. Approval for unbudgeted nonmember-related expenses shall require the written authorization of the chairman of the joint subcommittee and the respective Clerk. If a companion joint resolution of the other chamber is agreed to, written authorization of both Clerks shall be required.

No recommendation of the joint subcommittee shall be adopted if a majority of the House members or a majority of the Senate members appointed to the joint subcommittee: (i) vote against the recommendation; and (ii) vote for the recommendation to fail notwithstanding the majority vote of the joint subcommittee.

The joint subcommittee shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2008, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and

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59 recommendations no later than the first day of the 2009 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The
60 executive summary shall state whether the joint subcommittee intends to submit to the General
61 Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or
62 Senate document. The executive summary and the report shall be submitted as provided in the
63 procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents
64 and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

65 Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint
66 Rules Committee. The Committee may approve or disapprove expenditures for this study, extend or
67 delay the period for the conduct of the study, or authorize additional meetings during the 2008 interim.