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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 370

Offered January 21, 2013

Memorializing the Virginia delegation to the Congress of the United States to support federal action to allow increased weight limits for vehicles hauling agricultural and forestry products on interstate highways.

 Patron—Lucas

Unanimous consent to introduce

 Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, production agriculture employs nearly 60,000 farmers and workers in Virginia and generates approximately \$2.9 billion in total output, while industries that depend on farm commodities employ an additional 76,000 workers and generate \$26 billion in total industrial output, and agriculture-related industries contribute an additional 221,000 jobs and nearly \$26 billion in total output; and

WHEREAS, the forestry industry employs more than 248,000 Virginians and contributes more than \$30 billion in benefits to the state's economy each year; and

WHEREAS, the agricultural and forestry industries, and the transportation of agricultural and forestry products, are essential to the economic prosperity of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, it is difficult to accurately weigh vehicles when they are being loaded in the forest or in the field, which is why § 46.2-1129 of the Code of Virginia authorizes the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue permits extending the statutory weight limits for vehicles "hauling Virginia-grown forest or farm products . . . from the place where they are first produced, cut, harvested, or felled to the location where they are first processed"; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Highway Administration has given states the authority to extend the federal weight limits that apply to certain commercial motor vehicles, but has not allowed states to grant such extensions to vehicles carrying agricultural or forestry products on the Interstate Highway System; and

WHEREAS, authorizing large vehicles to travel over interstate highways would improve public safety by reducing the number of such vehicles traveling through commercial areas and residential neighborhoods, often on narrow, undivided roads, where they encounter intersections, crosswalks, driveways, traffic signals, and other conflict points; and

WHEREAS, in 2012 Congress enacted and the President signed the transportation funding legislation known as MAP-21, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, which among other things requires the United States Secretary of Transportation, in consultation with the states and with federal agencies, over the next two years to complete a comprehensive study of truck size and weight limits and to gather information regarding each state's laws and practices authorizing the operation of vehicles that exceed federal weight limits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Congressional Delegation is hereby memorialized to support federal action to allow increased weight limits for vehicles hauling agricultural and forestry products on interstate highways; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States Senate, the members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation, and the legislatures of the several states so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

INTRODUCED

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