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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 407

Offered February 14, 2017

Commending the Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc.

Patrons—Peake, Ebbin, Favola, Howell, McClellan, Ruff, Spruill, Vogel and Wexton; Delegates: Anderson, Bourne, Boysko, Byron, Carr, Garrett, Heretick, Herring, Hope, Knight, Landes, Levine, Minchew, Mullin, Plum, Rasoul, Simon, Toscano, Tyler and Ware

WHEREAS, the Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc., was founded in 1977 to provide legal assistance at no charge to low-income families and individuals in Central, Southside, and Western Tidewater Virginia, and is one of nine legal aid programs in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the mission of Virginia Legal Aid Society (VLAS) is to resolve serious legal problems of low-income people, to promote economic and family stability, to reduce poverty through effective legal assistance, and to champion equal justice; and

WHEREAS, VLAS uses legal skills to solve problems in the basics of life, including housing, access to health care, income and public benefits, family issues, consumer lending and assets, and education; and

WHEREAS, VLAS receives 18,000 contacts by telephone for assistance every year, and provides advice, representation, and other direct services or referrals to outside resources for two-thirds of applicants; the VLAS website is viewed by more than 45,000 unique visitors every year, and legal education materials on it are downloaded more than 10,000 times per year; and

WHEREAS, a 2011 economic impact report for Legal Services Corporation of Virginia revealed that legal aid work returns to Virginia communities at least \$5.27 for every dollar of support, an amount that does not capture hard-to-quantify benefits, such as savings to banks and investors from foreclosures averted, improved efficiencies in the courts, and payment to service providers like hospitals; and

WHEREAS, VLAS provides these services through offices in Lynchburg, Danville, Farmville, and Suffolk, with 15 full-time attorneys, eight paralegals, and 11 administrative and support staff, all supported by 170 volunteer attorneys and ably led by a board of directors of attorneys, low-income consumers, and community leaders; and

WHEREAS, VLAS does not charge its clients any fee and is able to provide these services and to meet its budget of \$2.8 million annually through state funding, the Legal Services Corporation, and more than 40 local funding sources, including foundations, United Way organizations, Area Agencies on Aging, local governments, and individual donors; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc., for its service to the Commonwealth on the occasion of its 40th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Virginia Legal Aid Society, Inc., as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the organization's work to provide meaningful access to justice for thousands of low-income Virginians every year.

INTRODUCED

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