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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 487

Offered January 11, 2023

Prefiled January 9, 2023

Requesting the Department of Transportation to study solar panel installation and use in medians of divided highways. Report.

Patron—Marshall (By Request)

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's goals for energy production include achieving 5,500 megawatts of wind and solar energy by 2028, powering 30 percent of the Commonwealth's electric system by renewable energy resources by 2030, and producing 100 percent of the Commonwealth's electricity from carbon-free sources, such as wind, solar, and nuclear by 2050; and

WHEREAS, property owners in the Commonwealth are generally permitted to install and operate solar facilities on their properties, subject to applicable law; Dominion Energy Virginia has completed or initiated construction on 34 solar projects, and such efforts contribute to the Commonwealth's clean energy goals; and

WHEREAS, solar panels, on the scale of a utility power plant, can require five to 10 acres per megawatt of power generation capacity; and

WHEREAS, many medians of divided highways are segments of land that may otherwise be unused; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Department of Transportation be requested to study solar panel installation and use in medians of divided highways.

In conducting its study, the Department of Transportation shall (i) collect data pertaining to (a) the amount of acreage of medians of divided highways that may be available for the installation of solar panels, (b) other uses of medians of divided highways and the effect such installations would have on such operations, and (c) the feasibility of maintaining the unused portions of land without interfering or damaging such installations; (ii) collaborate with the Departments of Energy and Environmental Quality to assess the feasibility and efficacy of solar panel installation on medians of divided highways and the energy generation capacity that such solar projects may have; (iii) estimate the costs of installation, costs of maintenance, and the net financial and tax benefits of such solar projects; (iv) investigate and estimate the potential impact such solar projects would have on reaching the Commonwealth's energy goals; and (v) evaluate the effects on highway safety that the installation, operation, and maintenance of such solar projects may have on adjacent highways.

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

The Department of Transportation shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2023, 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 2024 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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