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HOUSE BILL NO. 1031

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 10, 2024

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 30 a chapter numbered 67, consisting of sections numbered 30-430 through 30-436, relating to Commission on Legislature Modernization; report.

Patrons—Bennett-Parker, Glass, Shin, Callsen, Clark, Cohen, Feggans, Henson, Hernandez, Krizek, Laufer, Maldonado, Mundon King, Price, Seibold and Tran; Senators: Aird, Boysko, Carroll Foy, Pekarsky and Salim

Referred to Committee on Rules

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Title 30 a chapter numbered 67, consisting of sections numbered 30-430 through 30-436, as follows:

CHAPTER 67.**COMMISSION ON LEGISLATURE MODERNIZATION.****§ 30-430. Commission on Legislature Modernization; purpose.**

The Commission on Legislature Modernization (the Commission) is established in the legislative branch of state government. The purpose of the Commission is to study the operation and functionality of the General Assembly and to identify ways to make the legislature more effective, efficient, responsive, reflective, and transparent on behalf of all Virginians.

§ 30-431. Membership; terms; vacancies; chairman and vice-chairman.

The Commission shall consist of 17 members that include 9 legislative members, 6 nonlegislative citizen members, and 2 ex officio members. Members shall be appointed as follows: 5 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; 4 members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; 3 nonlegislative citizen members to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates; 3 nonlegislative citizen members to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; and the Clerk of the House of Delegates and the Clerk of the Senate, or their designees, to serve ex officio with nonvoting privileges. Nonlegislative citizen members shall be citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia and shall include representatives of nonprofit organizations that represent or advocate on behalf of (i) individuals with disabilities, (ii) seniors, (iii) rural Virginians, (iv) young persons, (v) people of color, (vi) women, (vii) new Americans, (viii) members of the military and their families, (ix) the labor industry, or (x) the business community. Unless otherwise approved in writing by the chairman of the Commission and the respective Clerk, nonlegislative citizen members shall only be reimbursed for travel originating and ending within the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purpose of attending meetings.

Legislative members and ex officio members of the Commission shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office. Nonlegislative citizen members shall be appointed for a term of two years. Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. Legislative members and nonlegislative citizen members may be reappointed. However, no nonlegislative citizen member shall serve more than four consecutive two-year terms. The remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's eligibility for reappointment. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments.

The Commission shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership, who shall be members of the General Assembly.

§ 30-432. Quorum; meetings; voting on recommendations.

A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. The Commission shall meet at least four times each year that it is active. The meetings of the Commission shall be held at the call of the chairman or whenever the majority of the members so request. All meetings of the Commission shall be held in accordance with the requirements of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq.).

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

§ 30-433. Compensation; expenses.

Legislative members of the Commission shall receive such compensation as provided in § 30-19.12, and nonlegislative citizen members shall receive such compensation for the performance of their duties

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57 as provided in § 2.2-2813. All members shall be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses
58 incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825. Compensation to
59 members of the General Assembly for attendance at official meetings of the Commission shall be paid
60 by the offices of the Clerk of the House of Delegates or Clerk of the Senate, as applicable. All other
61 compensation and expenses shall be paid from existing appropriations to the Commission or, if
62 unfunded, shall be approved by the Joint Rules Committee.

63 **§ 30-434. Powers and duties of the Commission.**

64 The Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

65 1. Analyze existing and new opportunities for expanding access to and participation in the state
66 legislative process by the citizens of the Commonwealth;

67 2. Make recommendations to improve recruitment and retention of legislative support staff and to
68 provide educational and professional development opportunities for legislative support staff;

69 3. Request and access the expertise of additional representatives or organizations relevant to the
70 Commission's goals and priorities; and

71 4. Gather data and information for study and review necessary to accomplish the purposes of the
72 Commission.

73 **§ 30-435. Staffing.**

74 Administrative staff support shall be provided by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates or
75 the Office of the Clerk of the Senate as may be appropriate for the house in which the chairman of the
76 Commission serves. The Division of Legislative Services shall provide legal, research, policy analysis,
77 and other services as requested by the Commission. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide
78 assistance to the Commission, upon request.

79 **§ 30-436. Termination of Commission; chairman's executive summary of activity and work of the**
80 **Commission.**

81 The Commission shall convene in accordance with the provisions of this chapter every 10 years in
82 the year ending in four for a period of two years. The chairman shall submit to the General Assembly
83 and the Governor (i) an executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Commission
84 undertaken in its first year, no later than the first day of the regular session of the General Assembly
85 subsequent to the Commission's first year, and (ii) a final report on the activity and work of the
86 Commission undertaken in its two years, including any recommendations for legislative actions, no later
87 than the first day of the regular session of the General Assembly subsequent to the Commission's second
88 year. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the
89 Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and
90 each shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

91 Following the submission of its final report, the Commission shall cease and the terms of all
92 members of the Commission shall expire.

93 **2. That, for its first year of existence, if the Commission on Legislature Modernization (the**
94 **Commission) is not funded by a separate appropriation in the appropriation act, the Commission**
95 **may be funded from the operating budgets of the Clerk of the House of Delegates and the Clerk**
96 **of the Senate upon the approval of the Joint Rules Committee. If the Commission is not funded by**
97 **a separate appropriation in the appropriation act for any year thereafter, this chapter shall expire**
98 **on July 1 of the fiscal year in which the Commission fails to receive such funding.**