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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 444

Offered January 14, 1997

Requesting The Library of Virginia to develop a five-year strategic information technology plan for the Commonwealth's public library system.

Patrons—Scott, Almand, Bennett, Connally, Darner, Diamonstein, Dillard, Hull, Lovelace, May, McClure, Mims, Moran, O'Brien, Plum, Puller, Rust and Van Landingham; Senators: Howell, Newman, Stosch, Ticer, Waddell and Whipple

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, "universal access" is the long-term public policy goal of making the information highway accessible to all citizens of the Commonwealth for no more than the cost of a local phone call; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Library and Information Network (VLIN), administered by The Library of Virginia, is a statewide electronic network which links Virginia's public libraries to each other and the Internet; and

WHEREAS, VLIN information is presented in text-only format (i.e., no maps, graphics, pictures, etc.), and access to VLIN, obtained through a local phone call or toll-free 800 number, is restricted to library staff; and

WHEREAS, public access to the Internet through VLIN is "mediated," which means that a library patron must give an Internet research request to a librarian, who, in turn, accesses the Internet through VLIN; and

WHEREAS, a handful of Virginia's public libraries provide direct dial-up service to the Internet through a modem connected to patrons' personal home computers; and

WHEREAS, other local libraries have chosen to provide direct public access to the Internet by placing personal computers in public areas of their libraries; and

WHEREAS, a recent survey by The Library of Virginia revealed that, statewide, Virginia's public libraries have only 351 personal computers available to serve a total state population of 3,481,900 and that nearly half of those computers (151) are available at the Norfolk Public Library as a result of a private donation; and

WHEREAS, The Library of Virginia's survey dramatically illustrates the point that achieving the goal of "universal access" to the information highway requires physical infrastructure like hardware (e.g., computers, servers, workstations, printers, and routers), software (e.g., Internet browser), user training and staff development, and funding for support and maintenance expenses; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, Maryland published *Toward the Year 2000: A Strategic Plan for the Maryland State Library Network*, and in 1995, Maryland's "Sailor" project grew to become a statewide telecommunications network which enables Maryland residents to access the Internet from their personal home computers via a modem and a toll-free telephone call into the Maryland public library system; and

WHEREAS, Maryland's Sailor project may serve as a model for Virginia's public library system to help achieve the goal of "universal access" in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That The Library of Virginia be requested to develop a five-year strategic information technology plan for the Commonwealth's public library system and to identify how that system will contribute towards achieving the goal of "universal access." The plan should include specific findings and recommendations and the projected costs thereof, such as the minimum technological standards for Virginia's public libraries (e.g., per capita ratio of computer workstations to population served).

Assistance may be provided to The Library of Virginia by the joint subcommittee on science and technology created by House Joint Resolution 195 (1996) or a successor joint subcommittee or entity thereof. Upon request, all agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to The Library of Virginia for this study.

The Library of Virginia shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations on or before November 15, 1997, to the joint subcommittee on science and technology created by House Joint Resolution 195 (1996) or a successor joint subcommittee or entity thereof and shall also submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1998 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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