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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 590

Offered January 20, 1997

Requesting the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission and the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission to jointly study the most cost-effective means of providing drinking water to their residents, and to develop a comprehensive regional water supply service plan for the area located within the two planning districts.

Patrons—Phillips, Stump and Tate

Referred to Committee on Conservation and Natural Resources

WHEREAS, reliable and safe drinking water supplies should be available to all Virginians; and
WHEREAS, in all communities, water supplies provide one of the most important components of infrastructure needed for community and economic development; and

WHEREAS, water supplies are especially important in the coalfield counties of southwestern Virginia, where surface and ground water resources are limited, and where, in 1990, less than one-half of the households were served by public water systems; and

WHEREAS, problems of water availability and water quality stem from several inherent factors, including the region's geology, topography, land use, a history of underdeveloped infrastructure and limited financial resources; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Cooperative Extension testing data found E. Coli bacterial contamination and the presence of unacceptable high levels of iron, sulfates and sodium in many household wells and springs; and

WHEREAS, such data suggests that there is a compelling need to provide more comprehensive monitoring and treatment of domestic water supplies if the region's water supplies are to be protected; and

WHEREAS, most of the easy and least costly extensions of water supplies have been made and what remains are the more difficult and costly improvements; and

WHEREAS, the income level of many unserved households is a significant obstacle to rate-based financing of costly options for providing public water supplies; and

WHEREAS, even though county public service authorities and local water utilities continue to develop water projects where financially feasible, the region lacks an effective institutional structure to provide oversight and technical assistance in such areas as fund raising, creative financing, project proposal evaluation and regional water supply planning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission and the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission jointly determine the most cost-effective means of providing drinking water to their residents, and develop a comprehensive regional water supply service plan for the area located within the two planning districts. The plan (i) shall place a priority on providing the most feasible water service to unserved and underserved residents, without concern for traditional jurisdictional boundaries or other artificial barriers to water service and (ii) shall not duplicate existing or ongoing planning efforts in various localities or subregions, but shall use existing technical data from those studies. In developing the plan the two Commissions shall complete technical studies for those portions of the region for which no such data exists or is outdated. The Commissions will retain or provide, as needed, sufficient engineering and technical support as required.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission and the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission for this study, upon request.

The Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission and the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission shall complete their work in time to submit their findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1999 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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