

# 1998 SESSION

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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 171

Offered January 26, 1998

*Requesting Judicial Council to study computerized legal assistance for the public.*

Patrons—Darner and Dillard

Referred to Committee on Science and Technology

WHEREAS, several courts in the Commonwealth have established small claims divisions to enable people with cases involving amounts of money too small, in many instances, to justify hiring an attorney, to litigate their claims without the assistance of counsel; and

WHEREAS, in keeping with this consumer-sensitive approach to civil reparations, the State of Arizona has developed a system of "quick court" computer kiosks which provide legal information to consumers for use in handling legal problems - and assist them in representing themselves in court and before public agencies; and

WHEREAS, the computer kiosks provide definitions of legal terms, information about landlord and tenant rights, enforcement of judgments, guidance on the use of small claims procedures, and information on divorce and child support; and

WHEREAS, the number of people representing themselves in out court systems seems to be growing according to some national studies, whether due to the increasing expense of legal representation or the increasing dissatisfaction with the quality of such representation. Whatever the reason, the legal system must respond to the public's need for information and assistance in handling the legal aspects of everyday life; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That Judicial Council be requested to study computerized legal assistance for the public. The study shall include determinations of (i) appropriate areas of the law, including agency administrative law, for inclusion in such a system, (ii) the target populations most in need of basic legal assistance whether in representing themselves in court or before a public agency, or seeking information concerning common legal issues or procedures (e.g., real estate closings; child support guidelines; filings in small claims court),(iii) locations best suited to the target populations, (iv) whether legal services can be provided to those for whom such services are not affordable, (v) whether there would be an impact on court backlogs or caseloads due to an increase or decrease in cases, or an increase in pro se cases, and (vi) other matters deemed appropriate for consideration by Council.

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

The Council shall complete its work in time to submit its 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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