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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 25

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 11, 2022

Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the efficiency of the legislative system in the Commonwealth. Report.

Patron—Convirs-Fowler

Committee Referral Pending

WHEREAS, Article IV of the Constitution of Virginia vests the legislative power of the Commonwealth in the General Assembly, which is the oldest continuous lawmaking body in the New World, consisting of the Senate and the House of Delegates and convening annually in January to conduct the business of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has historically been a part-time citizen legislature and maintains this status in name, but the National Conference of State Legislatures now classifies Virginia's legislature as a "hybrid" legislature, in which legislators report spending an amount of time equivalent to two-thirds of a full-time job in service to the legislature; and

WHEREAS, Senate Joint Resolution 243 (2000) directed the Joint Rules Committee to study ways to improve the legislative process and maintain the citizen legislature, which led to a restructuring of certain processes and schedules in the years that followed, but no comprehensive review of Virginia's legislative process has been conducted in the two decades that have passed since that time; and

WHEREAS, in eight of the past 10 years, special sessions have been convened to conduct the business of the General Assembly outside of regular sessions, resulting in an unpredictable schedule for legislators and staff working to meet the steadily increasing demands of the legislature and the needs of constituents; and

WHEREAS, throughout its long history, the General Assembly has examined and adapted its traditions and procedures to maintain an effective legislative process, and in order to meet the needs of an increasing and diversifying population, rapidly advancing technology, and a growing economy, the General Assembly must again consider means to increase its efficiency and effectiveness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the efficiency of the legislative system in the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall (i) analyze trends in the volume of legislation, number of days spent in session, and costs associated with the legislative process by year; (ii) examine the pros and cons of the legislative system as it currently exists and make recommendations regarding improvements to key elements of the legislative system, including the timing of regular sessions, committee size and scheduling, organizational processes, legislative deadlines, bill introduction limits, and staffing; (iii) compare the legislative systems of other states to Virginia's legislature and identify processes used by other state legislatures that may be implemented to improve the General Assembly's efficiency; and (iv) recommend procedural and legislative actions regarding the legislative system, including the timing, organization, and conduct of business of regular sessions of the General Assembly, that would serve to increase legislative efficiency.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission by the Office of the Clerk of the House of Delegates, the Office of the Clerk of the Senate, the Division of Legislative Services, and the Division of Legislative Automated Systems. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2022, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the 2023 Regular Session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor 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 and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

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