

**REPORT OF THE
JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE STUDYING**

Legislative Management

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



House Document No. 14

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1986**

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE

Speaker A. L. Philpott, Chairman
Delegate Thomas W. Moss, Jr., Vice Chairman
Mr. Philip F. Abraham
Mr. John J. Alexander, Jr.
Senator Hunter B. Andrews
Delegate Richard M. Bagley
Delegate Vincent F. Callahan, Jr.
Mr. Melville Carico
Senator William F. Parkerson, Jr.
Senator William A. Truban

STAFF

Legal and Research

Division of Legislative Services

Angela P. Bowser, Staff Attorney

Jane C. Lewis, Secretary

Administrative and Clerical

Office of the Clerk, House of Delegates

**Report of the Joint Subcommittee
Studying Legislative Management
To
The Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia
January, 1986**

To: Honorable Gerald L. Baliles, Governor of Virginia,
and The General Assembly of Virginia

INTRODUCTION

House Joint Resolution No. 124, which passed during the 1984 General Assembly Session, continued the joint subcommittee established by House Joint Resolution No. 83 in 1983. The results of the 1983 Legislative Management Study were reported in House Document No. 25 during the 1984 legislative session. The continuation of this study allowed the subcommittee to monitor the implementation and results of the recommendations contained in the report (House Document No. 25). The resolution also requested the subcommittee to determine an effective means of continually evaluating changes that occur in automated technology that may have applicability for legislative functions and evaluating the need for enhancing computer-assisted operations currently in effect within the legislative branch. House Joint Resolution No. 124 continued the study on legislative management for two years.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 124

Continuing the Joint Subcommittee on Legislative Management

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 9, 1984

Agreed to by the Senate, March 6, 1984

WHEREAS, at the 1983 Session of the Virginia General Assembly, House Joint Resolution No. 83 was adopted creating a joint subcommittee to conduct a study to analyze the legislative process; and

WHEREAS, after numerous meeting and deliberate consideration, the joint subcommittee has made many recommendations which should be implemented during the 1984 Session and shortly thereafter; and

WHEREAS, it is felt that the implementation and results of these recommendations should be monitored with the view of amending and supplementing them so as to achieve the most desirable legislative process possible; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Subcommittee on Legislative Management, created pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 83 of the 1983 Session, is continued for a period of two years. The membership of the present subcommittee appointed to conduct the study shall remain the same. Vacancies that may occur in the membership shall be filled by the appropriate appointing authority.

In addition to other matters, the subcommittee shall determine an effective means of continually evaluating changes that occur in automative technology that may have applicability for legislative functions and evaluating the need for enhancing computer-assisted operations currently in effect within the legislative branch.

The costs of this study, both direct and indirect, are estimated to be \$28,685.

The resolution provided that the membership of the subcommittee would be continued. However, due to the retirement of Senator Adelaire L. Brault from the Senate, Senator William F. Parkerson, Jr., was appointed as a member of the joint subcommittee. Speaker A. L. Philpott and Delegate Thomas W. Moss, Jr., again served as Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively.

FINDINGS

Technology

Automated technology has played a vital role in the legislative branch of the Commonwealth since its introduction in the 1970's. Computers are largely relied on by legislative staff to assist in the dissemination of information to the public. Automated technology has also been an essential element in the accumulation and the flow of legislative information as well as in increasing the productivity of staff.

Due to the rapid advances in technology which have occurred in the 1980's, legislatures are increasingly challenged to remain "up-to-date" and not to allow their technology to become obsolete. A subcommittee of the Legislative Support Commission meets regularly to discuss issues

concerning the staffing of the legislature. This subcommittee is composed of heads of legislative agencies and includes the Directors of the Division of Legislative Services, the Division of Legislative Automated Systems, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission and the Clerks of the House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia. Each of the subcommittee members of the Legislative Support Commission manages a legislative agency which depends on automated technology on a daily basis.

During 1984 and 1985 several technological advances were made by the Virginia General Assembly. The Senate utilized a new computerized vote tally machine which had been installed in January of 1985. The computerized vote tally machine replaced the electro-mechanical board which had been used for several years. The computerized vote tally machine has capabilities which further enhance the dissemination of legislative information. It is compatible with the office automation system in the Senate Clerk's Office and links to other computers used to support the Senate and other legislative operations. A signaling button on the machine allows the Lieutenant Governor and the Clerk of the Senate to request a Senator to approach the podium and enables a Senator to notify the podium that he wishes to be recognized. The House of Delegates is in the process of obtaining a similar vote tally machine. In addition to the features possessed by the machine utilized by the Senate, the House vote tally machine will also allow roll-call votes to be obtained almost immediately at legislative information booths in the Capitol. The House machine will also be capable of analyzing votes. It was installed for testing in December and will be utilized during the 1986 General Assembly Session.

The chambers of the House of Delegates are being refurbished. A portion of this renovation involves the extension of the podium desk to accommodate more people and equipment at the desk. In addition, the computerized vote tally machine will allow the Speaker to summon a Delegate to the podium by the use of a message button and will allow a Delegate to inform the Speaker that he wishes to be recognized.

In June of 1984, several legislative agencies installed a new computer system which combined data processing and word processing. Features entailing graphics, microfiche, personal computing, spread sheet applications and statistical analysis can be utilized. Spread sheet applications are used by financial analysts for projections and formulations. The word processing capabilities of the system enhances the production of reports and correspondence. The graphic capabilities facilitate preparation of data such as pie charts, bar charts, histograms, etc., instead of only a tabular display of the data. The system can provide automated calendars and can obtain calendars of others to arrange meetings at convenient times. Staff can send messages to other employees through the system. Data processing features, including the bill status system, the bill preparation status system, a photocomposition system, a text editing system, a budget and statistical analysis system and a statutory research system, can all be accessed through the new computer system.

Informational services, such as "Legisnet," available through the National Conference of State Legislators, can also be accessed on the system. A separate computer which was formerly necessary to access "Legisnet" has been removed from the library of the Division of Legislative Services.

Training on the new system was provided in-house by the Division of Legislative Automated Systems. Managers, professional staff and clerical staff became versed in and proficient with the system. In addition, a mechanism was established to allow the staff of legislative support agencies and users of the system to share ideas and other information on automation through a newsletter.

Public Access

Public access to General Assembly deliberations is one of the most important features of the Commonwealth's legislative process. The subcommittee, during its 1983 study, was concerned with continuing the improvements in public accessibility to legislative deliberations. As recommended by the group in its 1984 report, distribution efforts of bill summaries were intensified. The number of notices for conference committee meetings which appeared in the Calendars for each house increased. Those notices which were not obtained in time to print in the Calendar were available in the Offices of the Clerks. These efforts increased the possibility of attendance by

citizens, the news media and lobbyists.

Changes were also made in the manuals for the House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia. Pictures of the members were added to the manual for the Senate and historical data pertaining to the names and service dates of former Speakers of the Senate, Presidents of the Senate, Presidents Pro Tempore of the Senate, Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate, as well as Clerks of the Colonial Council of the State were given. The manual for the House of Delegates now includes the committee assignments of the members in their biographies. The contents of manuals for each house were rearranged. Important information retained in the manuals includes: the members; the officials and employees of each house; the seating arrangement of the members; the legislative offices and addresses; a map of Virginia Congressional Districts; House and Senate members by Congressional Districts; State Senatorial Districts and Senators; House Districts and Delegates; standing committees and committee assignments; biographies of the members; seating arrangements of each house and diagrams of each chamber; the Rules of each house; state officials; and the seniority list for the Senate.

Committee Deliberations and Legislative Flow

Committee deliberations and legislative flow were improved by the recommendations contained in the 1984 report. A concerted effort was made to distribute notice cards to patrons of legislation only when their bills would be considered at the committee or subcommittee meeting. This eliminated the usual practice of notifying all of the chief patrons of legislation on the docket. Since it is rare that the entire docket is addressed at meetings, this system allowed for a more organized and structured procedure.

Chairmen of standing committees encouraged subcommittee chairmen to announce their scheduled meetings prior to the adjournment of the standing committee meeting. Subcommittee chairmen were more consistent in notifying the appropriate Clerk's Office of their scheduled subcommittee meeting. This allowed the information to be printed in the daily Calendar, posted at an information site and keyed into the computer bill status system. Chairmen of the subcommittees also recognized the necessity of the establishment of a quorum prior to the commencement of the meeting.

As many conflicts as possible in the scheduling of committee meetings were eliminated by the Clerks' Offices and a survey of the Capitol and General Assembly Building was conducted to locate additional conference rooms for meetings. The Clerks have also attempted to schedule legislative meetings during the interim on dates which are most convenient to the members and when other meetings with similar membership are scheduled.

Amendments to the Constitution of Virginia as well as other legislation have been increasingly written in "plain language" so that their meanings are not misinterpreted by the public. The Senate Rules (Senate Rule 26g) and the House Rules (House Rule 39a) were amended to allow the Clerk of the appropriate house to establish a procedure for commemorating or honoring resolutions for persons other than former (i) members of the General Assembly, (ii) statewide elected officials or (iii) members of the United States Congress (Senate Rules specify United States House of Representatives). The Senate and House Rules provide for exceptions to Senate Rule 26(g) and House Rule 39(a). A copy of these rules has been included in the Appendix.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations of the 1983 study subcommittee were formulated to improve public access and increase public information regarding the legislative process and legislative activities. This report briefly relates the changes which have occurred in the legislative process since the publication of House Document No. 25 in 1984. As technology advances, additional programs, systems and adjustments are anticipated. The General Assembly of Virginia and the legislative agencies will continue to strive to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth at the highest potential.

Respectfully submitted,

.....

A. L. Philpott, Chairman

.....

Thomas W. Moss, Jr., Vice Chairman

.....

Philip F. Abraham

.....

John J. Alexander, Jr.

.....

Hunter B. Andrews

.....

Richard M. Bagley

.....

Vincent F. Callahan, Jr.

.....

Melville Carico

.....

William F. Parkerson, Jr.

.....

William F. Truban

APPENDIX

RULES OF THE HOUSE

39(a). Resolutions or joint resolutions honoring or commemorating former (1) members of the Virginia General Assembly, (2) statewide elected officials, or (3) Virginia members of the United States Congress shall be introduced under Rule 37. All other commemorating or honoring resolutions shall conform to the procedure set forth by the Clerk of the House and shall not be referred under Rule 37, unless so ordered by the Speaker or by majority vote of the House on motion of a member, but shall be placed upon the Calendar.

RULES OF THE SENATE

26(g) Only resolutions or joint resolutions honoring or commemorating former members of the General Assembly, former statewide elected officials, or former members of the United States House of Representatives, upon their demise shall be introduced. All other commemorating or honoring resolutions shall conform to the form and procedure set forth by the Clerk of the Senate and shall not be referred to the Committee on Rules but shall be placed upon the Calendar on the next Thursday of the session and shall be considered for approval on said day provided any one member may object to such consideration and the same shall be continued to the next Thursday session or any member may move that the same be referred to the Committee on Rules. No exception to this Rule 26(g) shall be made, unless the Senator proposing such exception has first presented it at a meeting of the Committee on Rules and a majority of the members elected to such Committee has voted in favor of the exception.

