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The 1972 Virginia General Assembly was faced with 1716 pieces of legislation in their 60 day session which ended March 11th. However, the quantitative figures are virtually meaningless since there are few legislative bodies which are not similarly inundated. The better measure of the General Assembly's success or failure is in the quality of legislation passed. At least in some respects this session was close to extraordinary.

The Assembly was faced from the outset with a distinct power vacuum left by the retirement of most of both houses' aged members. The leadership ranks of both parties were decimated by Father Time's unflinching hand. With around 40 new members out of a body of 140, there were bound to be problems. Add to this the increased representation from the state's urban areas and the stage was set for potential pyrotechnics.

Some political observers felt that the election of Independent né Democrat Henry Howell carried a more or less direct message to the legislators who gathered to hear Governor Holton deliver his state of the State message in January. The message was that it was time for the Virginia General Assembly to begin to legislate for the good of all the citizens of the Commonwealth—not just the "big boys."

## 60 Days in Richmond

Since the major bills before the General Assembly have been fully discussed by the news media it might be wise to look at some of the legislation that was not so favored by television and the daily papers. What follows is a list of some of the bills which passed. Each bill's sponsor and code Section affected are in parentheses.

- A judge now has the alternative of committing a convicted drug offender to a treatment center instead of prison. (Fears, New S. 54-524.102)

- It is now against the law to show certain motion pictures. For instance, those considered obscene to juveniles where the movie can be seen from a public way or a place of public accommodation. (Brault, S. 181-236.7)

- In certain cases, witnesses to a will may now sign a document instead of making a personal appearance in court when the will is being probated. (Brault, S. 64.1-87.1)

- There is now a new form for filing garnishment proceedings. (Fidler, S. 8-441)

- A series of reforms were passed in order to bring the commonwealth income tax structure into closer conformity with the federal system. This includes moving the filing date to April 15th. (Slaughter, 58-151.02 etc.)

- One new addition to the Code was the Retail Franchising Act. (Carneal, S. 13.1-55 to 13.1-574)

There were, of course, a number of bills either shelved or killed outright. It is safe to predict that most will be reintroduced in 1973. For instance the bills requiring open dating and unit pricing will definitely be reconsidered next year, as will no-fault auto insurance—in some form. In action on election laws, the Assembly decided not to hold a Presidential primary in Virginia and not to institute voting for Governor, Lieutenant-Governor and Attorney General by party slate. Environmental measures passed included a wetlands protection bill, a strip mining bill and a Land Use Policy Act. All three were weakened substantially before passage and efforts to strengthen each of them can be expected.

In terms of future legislation reference should be made to several newly created state study commissions. What follows is a list of the major studies to be undertaken in the next few years. Included is the sponsor of the Resolution and the date their report is due.

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**RICHMOND**

(from page 16)

*Senate Joint Resolutions:*

#7 (Gray, F. T.) memorializing Congress to amend the Constitution of the United States to forbid busing to achieve racial balance in the public schools.

#11 (Waddell) creates a commission on bad check losses—to seek methods to reduce losses. (Sept. 1, 1973)

#16 (Brault) commission to study the cost and administration of health care services. (Dec. 1, 1973)

#26 (Gray, F. T.) directs the Code Commission to study the extent to which the Uniform Vehicle Code may be usefully adopted. (Nov. 1, 1972)

#28 (Bateman) to continue the work of the Consumer Credit Study Commission. (Nov. 1, 1973)

#36 (McNamara) directs the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council to study the Compensation Board. (Nov. 1, 1973)

#37 (Moody) recommending that the State Corporation Commission adopt rules of practice and procedure.

*House Joint Resolutions*

#8 (Lane) directs Virginia Advisory Legislative Council to study the possibility of establishing an office of Ombudsman in Virginia.

#15 (Heilig) creates a commission on separation and divorce. (Nov. 1, 1972)

#19 (Diamonstein) creates a commission on the compensation of victims of crime. (November 1, 1973)

#20 (Philpott) creates a commission to study the system of alcoholic beverage control in Virginia and recommend any changes—or the elimination—of the board. (Jan. 1, 1974)

#35 (Carneal) direct Virginia Advisory Legislative Council to study feasibility of creating a state agency to assist localities in determining the impact of a new industry in a community. (Nov. 1, 1973)

#41 (Diamonstein) creating a commission to study the laws regulating professions and occupations and their administration. (Dec. 1, 1972)

#44 (Slaughter) creation of Land Use Study Commission. (Dec. 1, 1973)

#50 (McMurrin) directs Virginia Advisory Legislative Council to study the possibility of consolidation of all environmental agencies of the state into one department.

#121 (Michie) direct state Department of Health to study the advisability of increasing and expanding birth control programs. (Dec. 1, 1972)

When one considers the problems faced by the General Assembly in this session, their record is by and large a good one, especially when compared to some past dismal sessions. Some small, tentative steps were taken into heretofore virgin ground such as consumer and environmental protection. A number of controversial items were given to study commissions and if the legislature will seriously consider the results of the Commissions reports, and not merely bury them in the ever increasing work-load with which they must contend, the future of our Old Dominion will be a bright one. ■