

Senate Resolution 460

By: Senators Wilkinson of the 50th, Walker III of the 20th, Black of the 8th, Miller of the 49th, Anderson of the 24th and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Creating the Senate Agriculture, Forestry, and Landscape Workforce Access Study
2 Committee; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia recognizes the importance of agriculture, forestry, and
4 landscape jobs and the economic benefits provided state wide, including roles for food and
5 plant production, processing, distribution, landscape design and enhancements, tourism,
6 property values, environmental benefits, and stewardship of our natural resources; and

7 WHEREAS, these industries generate upwards of \$74 billion in economic activity state wide
8 and provide career opportunities in both rural and urban settings; and

9 WHEREAS, as the economy has grown and unemployment rates are near record lows, many
10 employers in agriculture, forestry, and landscape cannot find the necessary work force to
11 meet production demands; and

12 WHEREAS, increasing consumer wealth is adding to the growth of the service sector, thus
13 there is higher demand for a work force in these career fields; and

14 WHEREAS, federal work force visa programs are currently failing a majority of these farms
15 and agribusinesses due to the high cost and cumbersome requirements; and

16 WHEREAS, the landscaping, forestry, and food processing sectors can attest to the federal
17 visa program being inadequate in scope and woefully short on the number of workers
18 allowed for these jobs; and

19 WHEREAS, those involved in fruit, vegetable, pecan, dairy, greenhouse, turfgrass, nursery,
20 and other commodities have long advocated for changes to the federal visa program to
21 provide needed flexibility and to broaden the employment scope; and

22 WHEREAS, exploring new employment initiatives in technical schools, youth career
 23 development programs, coordination among state agencies, and other such efforts to improve
 24 work force availability is imperative.

25 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE:

26 (1) **Creation of Senate study committee.** There is created the Senate Agriculture,
 27 Forestry, and Landscape Workforce Access Study Committee.

28 (2) **Members and officers.** The committee shall be composed of nine members as
 29 follows:

30 (A) The chairperson of the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee;

31 (B) The chairperson of the Senate Education and Youth Committee;

32 (C) The chairperson of the Senate Economic Development and Tourism Committee;

33 (D) One citizen member appointed by the President of the Senate;

34 (E) One citizen member appointed by the Governor;

35 (F) The State School Superintendent or his or her designee;

36 (G) The Commissioner of Agriculture or his or her designee;

37 (H) The Commissioner of Labor or his or her designee; and

38 (I) The executive director of the Georgia Urban Agriculture Council.

39 The chairperson of the Senate Agriculture and Consumer Affairs Committee shall serve
 40 as chairperson of the committee.

41 (3) **Powers and duties.** The committee shall undertake a study of the conditions, needs,
 42 issues, and problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any action or
 43 legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate.

44 (4) **Meetings.** The chairperson shall call all meetings of the committee. The committee
 45 may conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary or
 46 convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its duties, and
 47 accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution.

48 (5) **Allowances, expenses, and funding.**

49 (A) The legislative members of the committee shall receive the allowances provided
 50 for in Code Section 28-1-8 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated.

51 (B) Members of the committee who are state officials, other than legislative members,
 52 or who are state employees shall receive no compensation for their services on the
 53 committee, but they may be reimbursed for expenses incurred by them in the
 54 performance of their duties as members of the committee in the same manner as they
 55 are reimbursed for expenses in their capacities as state officials or employees.

56 (C) Members of the committee who are not legislators, state officials, or state
 57 employees shall receive a daily expense allowance in an amount the same as that

58 specified in subsection (b) of Code Section 45-7-21 of the Official Code of Georgia
59 Annotated, as well as the mileage or transportation allowance authorized for state
60 employees.

61 (D) The allowances authorized by this resolution shall not be received by any member
62 of the committee for more than five days unless additional days are authorized. Funds
63 necessary to carry out the provisions of this resolution shall come from funds
64 appropriated to the Senate; except that funds for the reimbursement of the expenses of
65 state officials, other than legislative members, and for the reimbursement of the
66 expenses of state employees shall come from funds appropriated to or otherwise
67 available to their respective agencies.

68 **(6) Report.**

69 (A) In the event the committee adopts any specific findings or recommendations that
70 include suggestions for proposed legislation, the chairperson shall file a report of the
71 same prior to the date of abolishment specified in this resolution, subject to
72 subparagraph (C) of this paragraph.

73 (B) In the event the committee adopts a report that does not include suggestions for
74 proposed legislation, the chairperson shall file the report, subject to subparagraph (C)
75 of this paragraph.

76 (C) No report shall be filed unless the same has been approved prior to the date of
77 abolishment specified in this resolution by majority vote of a quorum of the committee.
78 A report so approved shall be signed by the chairperson of the committee and filed with
79 the Secretary of the Senate.

80 (D) In the absence of an approved report, the chairperson may file with the Secretary
81 of the Senate a copy of the minutes of the meetings of the committee in lieu thereof.

82 **(7) Abolishment.** The committee shall stand abolished on December 31, 2019.