**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO PROVIDE THAT A STATEWIDE ADVISORY REFERENDUM MUST BE CONDUCTED BY THE STATE ELECTION COMMISSION AT THE SAME TIME AS THE 2016 GENERAL ELECTION ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE CONSTITUTIONAL PER DIEM OF MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD BE INCREASED TO $35,000 OR $50,000.

Whereas, the annual constitutional per diem for members of the General Assembly is $10,400; and

Whereas, the per diem amount has remained the same since June 1990 and even then was only raised by a mere $400 beginning July 1, 1991; and

Whereas, the General Assembly convenes the second Tuesday in January and adjourns the first Thursday the following June and during the session the duties every member is required to fulfill is a full‑time job; and

Whereas, in the current age, a constituent has access to their representative at all hours of every day through email, and therefore even when the General Assembly is not in session, a member’s responsibilities to their district never ends; and

Whereas, the study committee created by Act 278 of 2012 and conducted by the Hay Group found that members of the General Assembly’s compensation is significantly below both the regional and national averages and that South Carolina should consider pay increases for members of the General Assembly.

Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) A statewide advisory referendum must be conducted by the State Election Commission at the same time as the 2016 general election on the question of whether or not the constitutional per diem of members of the General Assembly should be increased to $35,000 or $50,000. The state election laws shall apply to the referendum, mutatis mutandis. The State Board of Canvassers shall publish the results of the referendum and certify them to the Governor and each house of the General Assembly.

(B) Ballots must be provided to all qualified electors participating in the referendum with the following question printed on the ballot:

“Should the constitutional per diem of members of the General Assembly be increased to $35,000, or should it be increased to $50,000?

$35,000 

$50,000 

Those voting in favor of $35,000 shall deposit a ballot with a check or cross mark in the square after the number ‘$35,000’, and those voting in favor of $50,000 shall deposit a ballot with a check or cross mark in the square after the number ‘$50,000’.”

(C) The cost of the referendum must be paid from funds appropriated to the State Election Commission and the results of the referendum are advisory only.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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