

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 228

By Southerland

A RESOLUTION in support of the recommendations of the
Agricultural Education and Youth Participation
Task Force.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly is pleased to celebrate Tennessee FFA during National FFA week (February 20-27, 2021) and emphasize the importance of agricultural education and involvement in the National FFA Organization to develop students' potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success; and

WHEREAS, because agriculture accounts for more than \$57 billion of Tennessee's economy, economic security as a state requires a prosperous agricultural industry and a thriving workforce pipeline that reflects the value and opportunity for careers in agriculture; and

WHEREAS, the youth of Tennessee must be provided ample opportunity to explore careers in the fields of agriculture through strong agricultural education and youth participation programs; and

WHEREAS, in furtherance of these goals, the Agricultural Education and Youth Participation Task Force was established by the General Assembly in April 2019; and

WHEREAS, in fulfillment of its charge, the Agricultural Education and Youth Participation Task Force developed and approved recommendations to implement an agricultural education and workforce system in Tennessee that will lead the nation; the Task Force submitted such recommendations to Governor Bill Lee on January 31, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Agricultural Education and Youth Participation Task Force recommended that the expertise of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) and the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) be combined and that the two departments work cooperatively to improve the agricultural education program and structure; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force recommended that this new partnership be supported by:

(1) An increase in staff support for agricultural education by the creation of TDA positions focused on the FFA and students' Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs and devotion of current TDOE staff positions to curriculum development and teacher support;

(2) The execution of a Memorandum of Understanding between the TDA and the TDOE; and

(3) The establishment of a five-member volunteer Agricultural Education Council to serve as a permanent advisory group for the agricultural education program and monitor the partnership between the TDA and the TDOE; and

WHEREAS, the Task Force also recommended the following:

(1) The growth and expansion of school-based agricultural education programs and FFA membership, from middle school through high school, to provide robust career and occupation opportunities within the agricultural industry;

(2) The establishment of an Agriculture Education Extended Day program for the purpose of providing SAE and FFA services to agricultural education students beyond the regular school day to increase employability skills of our students; the program would supplement local education agencies by paying any certified agriculture education teacher who provides these services for one extra hour per day throughout the school year;

(3) The development of a statewide policy to encourage local school superintendents to allow students involved in 4-H programs the ability to participate in 4-H activities as an extracurricular school activity during the school day, for up to ten days, without being counted absent;

(4) The establishment of extension specialist staff positions to provide technical, pedagogical, and curriculum support for Tennessee 4-H agents;

(5) An ongoing review of emerging fields and new technologies in agriculture and the development of recommendations to prepare students for higher education and lifelong success in Tennessee's agriculture sector;

(6) An increase in staff support for agricultural education by creating positions within UT Extension to support county, regional, and state level 4-H work;

(7) The identification and acknowledgement of agricultural education as a key component of the STEM movement within TDOE; and

(8) The creation of new public/private partnerships that can successfully convene educational leaders and industry experts around a shared vision of high quality rural economic opportunity and develop new cutting-edge ag-tech degree programs that will train rural students for 21st century agriculture jobs; and

WHEREAS, these timely and innovative recommendations reflect the outstanding quality of Tennessee's FFA members and their ongoing commitment to improved access to agricultural education and increased viability of agriculture as a career; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we strongly support the above-delineated recommendations made by the Agricultural Education and Youth Participation Task Force and urge Governor Bill Lee to act positively on such recommendations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Honorable Bill Lee, Governor of Tennessee.