

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 674  
By Chumney

A RESOLUTION to urge the joint legislative services committee to form a working staff group to study how to best prepare the general assembly for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

WHEREAS, as Tennessee approaches the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it is important to prepare the Tennessee General Assembly for the new challenges ahead; and

WHEREAS, legislators are faced with increasingly complex and added responsibilities due to the challenges of managing a 14 billion dollar budget spanning the gamut of issues, including health care, education, environment, criminal justice and programs for families and children, and due to new requirements being devolved daily from the federal government to the state; and

WHEREAS, in our rapidly changing technological world, it is incumbent upon our legislative branch of government to maintain its professionalism and to keep pace with standard workplace practices; and

WHEREAS, we are now in the technology, information and communications age, which makes it critical that legislators be trained in using and have access to the Internet in order to keep abreast of new laws, innovations, policies and information available around the nation and world, and that legislators have the capabilities necessary to communicate effectively with constituents across the State of Tennessee; and

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WHEREAS, we are proud to be Americans with a democratic form of government that is by, of and for the people and that has as its foundation the right of the people to have access to and participate in their government, and

WHEREAS, new technologies now make it possible to communicate by teleconferencing with citizens across the state; and

WHEREAS, the legislature voted to create 21<sup>st</sup> Century classrooms for children across the state with funding for computers in our schools, and needs to ensure that our state legislative body keeps pace; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we urge the Joint Legislative Services Committee to appoint a working staff group in order that the General Assembly may perform its duties in a more efficient and effective manner. The working group should evaluate how to best prepare the Tennessee General Assembly for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, including:

(1) A study of the fiscal impact and efficiency considerations of providing laptop or other computers to members of the General Assembly, including consideration of the resultant reduction of copying, duplication and other expenses, by the use of such computers in committee meetings and in the respective chambers with access to the General Assembly's network system;

(2) A study of the expense, the cost-savings (through reduced travel and lodging expenses) and the feasibility of conducting certain legislative committee meetings, such as subcommittees or out-of session committee meetings, by teleconferencing, with an analysis of the benefit to citizens across the state who will be able to view such committee proceedings from locations across the state;

(3) A study of the advantages of providing computer access for members to the General Assembly's computer network system from their home district offices, enabling them to access

pending legislation and amendments more rapidly for review, to respond more promptly to constituent e-mail, and to connect with their legislative offices so as to respond to constituent inquiries on evenings and weekends when staff are not available, and a study of the resultant reduction in postage and facsimile costs;

(4) A study of the activities and operations of other state legislatures across the nation with regard to standing and other committee research and staff budgets and resources, home office staff and resources, equipment and allowances for legislative members, and comparison and analysis of our General Assembly's readiness for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and ways to better prepare;

(5) A study of how to streamline the legislative computer system so as to provide session and committee calendars and copies of bills and amendments to general assembly members prior to the consideration of such bills and amendments during session so that members have ample opportunity to review such legislation prior to its consideration;

(6) A study of the need to provide convenient and affordable day care facilities for legislative members, staff and constituents who are here to work on legislative issues; and

(7) A study of securing additional or other committee rooms and conference rooms to ensure that adequate facilities exist for carrying out legislative business.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Joint Legislative Services Committee is encouraged to appoint the following persons or their designees to the working staff group:

- (1) The clerk of the house of representatives;
- (2) The clerk of the senate;
- (3) The director of the office of legislative administration;
- (4) The director of the office of legal services;
- (5) The director of the office of legislative information services;
- (6) The director of the legislative budget analysis office; and
- (7) The director of the fiscal review committee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the working staff group should consult with citizens, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and other appropriate entities and evaluate the Tennessee General Assembly's ability to meet the citizens' needs for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century state legislative body.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the working staff group shall report its findings and make recommendations regarding improvements to the Joint Legislative Services Committee on or before January 15, 1999, so as to allow time for implementation of needed improvements before the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the co-chairs of the Joint Legislative Services Committee.