

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 516
By McAfee

A RESOLUTION to create a special joint committee to study issues relating to child abandonment.

WHEREAS, the issue of child abandonment is of vital concern to citizens throughout Tennessee and affects the lives of children daily; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-15-401, states that any person who knowingly, other than by accidental means, treats a child under the age of seven in such a manner as to inflict injury, or neglects such child so as to adversely affect the child's health and welfare, commits a Class D felony; and

WHEREAS, supporters of legislation to ease the surrender of abandoned children, and eliminate prosecution associated therewith, argue that mothers who abandon their babies often hide their pregnancy and do not receive prenatal care, resulting in babies being born with serious health problems that demand prompt attention; and

WHEREAS, they further contend that offering alternatives to new parents who are overwhelmed by the immediate responsibilities of caring for a baby would encourage more

parents to deliver their newborns to safe havens rather than abandon them to die; at the same time giving them complete anonymity and freedom from prosecution; and

WHEREAS, opponents argue that such freedom of prosecution would do little to remedy the problem of abandoned newborns; would result in inadequate information to notify or involve the biological father, and would result in inadequate information to enable others to care for or adopt such child; and that the law, if enacted, should apply to older children as well, who are often as defenseless as newborn children; and

WHEREAS, the interests of children must continue to be the paramount consideration in this matter, which is of great importance to the members of this legislative body; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That there is hereby created a special joint committee to study issues relating to child abandonment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the committee shall consist of three (3) members of the House of Representatives and three (3) members of the Senate, to be appointed by the respective speakers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That all appropriate state agencies shall provide assistance to the special joint committee upon request of the chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That all legislative members of the special joint committee who are duly elected members of the General Assembly shall remain members of such committee until the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the special joint committee shall be convened by the member with the most years of continuous service in the General Assembly; and at its first meeting shall elect a chair, vice-chair, and such other officers the committee deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the special committee shall timely report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation or interim reports, to the One Hundred Second General Assembly, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.