

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 750

By Burks

A RESOLUTION urging the United States Congress to pass the Meth-Endangered Children Protection Act of 2005.

WHEREAS, meth trafficking and abuse is on the rise in the United States, and it has increased sharply since 2000; according to the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, approximately 12.3 million Americans ages 12 and older reported trying meth at least once during their lifetimes; and

WHEREAS, the Office of National Drug Policy reports that between 2000 and 2003, more than 51,000 illegal meth labs were seized in the United States, and the number of clandestine labs has been rising rapidly; in fact, a high number of state and local governments now consider meth the greatest drug threat in the country; and

WHEREAS, sadly, thousands of children have become innocent victims of the meth epidemic; approximately 10,600 children in the United States were affected by meth lab seizures and incidents between 2000 and 2003; these children were either present at lab seizures or lived where the labs were seized, often in extremely filthy and neglectful conditions; and

WHEREAS, another 2,900 children were removed from their homes during the same period because of neglect or abuse by meth-addicted parents; incidents related to meth labs also accounted for injuries to 96 children and the deaths of eight others; in Tennessee alone, law enforcement seized nearly 1,200 labs between 2003 and 2004, representing a 397 percent increase from 2000; Tennessee accounts for 75 percent of the math lab seizures in the Southeast, and more than 700 children in Tennessee are placed in protective custody each year as a result of meth lab seizures; and

WHEREAS, children exposed to meth because of a lab in the home often need specialized services to overcome the effects of their exposure; children removed from homes where meth is manufactured can suffer from increased heart rate, agitation, irritability and vomiting, muscle breakdown, fever, ataxia, and seizures; they can also suffer physical, medical, education neglect, and learning disabilities; and

WHEREAS, many of the children rescued from these environments need specialized medical attention, psychological care, and other services; unfortunately, few states have the funds to provide these services or to provide social workers and other professionals with the specialized training and resources necessary to render appropriate care to children and ensure that subsequent placements in foster or adoptive homes are successful; and

WHEREAS, the Meth-Endangered Children Protection Act would establish a \$10 million annual competitive grant program to support model efforts such as California's DEC program and to assist states in establishing similar programs; grantees would be required to provide matching dollars for federal funds awarded under this grant; and

WHEREAS, thousands of children have become victims of the rising meth epidemic; through no fault of their own, these children, suffering at the hands of their meth-addicted parents, urgently need medical attention, psychological care, and social services; the Meth-Endangered Children Protection Act is of vital importance in ensuring that our nation's children recover from the ravages of meth abuse; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby urge the United States Congress to pass the Meth-Endangered Children Protection Act of 2005 to aid the most vulnerable victims of this terrible and destructive drug epidemic.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, and each member of Tennessee's Congressional delegation.