

HOUSE BILL 844

By Wright

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 3,
Chapter 1, Part 1, relative to the general
assembly.

WHEREAS, we affirm the value of our chaplain-for-a-day program, which invites others to open our floor sessions in Word and prayer, and, while we desire to maintain that program as-is, we also wish to have a chaplain that provides personal and pastoral care for members and staff on an ongoing basis; and

WHEREAS, we also recognize that chaplaincy care must be nonpolitical and nonpartisan and available to all; we affirm pastoral care to be provided by a non-lobbyist and serve all members and staff with a nondenominational presence and to provide support with immediate or ongoing needs; now, therefore:

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 3, Chapter 1, Part 1, is amended by adding the following as a new section:

(a) Pursuant to Article II, Section 11, requiring the senate and the house of representatives to each choose its officers, each house of the general assembly may appoint a chaplain at the start of each biennial legislative session by voting on nominations made from the floor of the respective house.

(b) Nominees shall:

(1) Be a member of the clergy; and

(2) Have experience in providing spiritual guidance and counseling.

(c) The nominee receiving the majority of the votes in each house is appointed to serve as the chaplain for that respective house for the duration of the biennial session

for which the chaplain was nominated and serves at the pleasure of the respective house. An appointed chaplain must be given:

(1) Access to each building where staff and member offices are located, including the second floor of the state capitol;

(2) An assigned parking space;

(3) An office;

(4) Equipment and supplies as necessary to fulfill the duties of a chaplain, including, but not limited to, a computer, a printer, a copy machine and scanner, paper, and other usual and customary office supplies; and

(5) Reimbursement for expenses, including mileage and per diem in accordance with § 3-1-106.

(d) Costs associated with the items under subsection (c) must be paid by the respective house.

(e) The speaker of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives may, at their discretion, provide additional compensation for their respective chaplain from available discretionary funds.

(f) The office of chaplain shall be nonpartisan, nonpolitical, and nonsectarian.

(g) The creation of a chaplaincy does not affect the tradition in both chambers of permitting a religious leader to open a floor session of either chamber. The chaplain may open a floor session upon request of the speaker of the senate or the speaker of the house of representatives, as applicable.

(h) A vacancy in the office of chaplain for the remainder of an unexpired term must be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect July 1, 2023, the public welfare requiring it.