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"Caylee's Law" May Come to Tennessee

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6 News Anchor/Reporter

KNOXVILLE (WATE) - The outrage across the country and right here in East Tennessee continues days after the not guilty verdict in the Casey Anthony trial.

The frustration has led to a push for "Caylee's Law." The specifics vary, but basically supporters want to charge parents with a felony if they don't report their child's disappearance right away.

As of Friday night, nearly 800,000 people nationwide had signed an online petition started by an Oklahoma woman.

"There are a lot of citizens in our area who think Ms. Anthony got away with murder and they want some form of justice served," said state Rep. Ryan Haynes.

That's what he's hearing from his constituents and he hopes to introduce a version of "Caylee's Law" once the Tennessee general assembly resumes in January.

"Somebody could be brought up on felony charges if they fail to report somebody missing within a 24 hour time period," Rep. Haynes explained.

Lincoln Memorial University law professor Chuck MacLean thinks it's a good idea, but urges lawmakers to take care and think it through.

"For example, what age are you going to set this at," MacLean asked. "How are we going to define missing? If you haven't gone eyeball to eyeball with that child are you obligated to report it missing? What if you've had phone contact or cell phone contact? Is that sufficient? How about a text message?"

Haynes knows a new law will have to answer all of those questions and more.

"If they're 15, 16, 17, in that range, and they decide to run away from home and maybe a parent is looking for them, they know they're gone, I can understand why you would maybe want to give somebody a little bit more leeway," Haynes said.

He added that even if the public outcry dies down by January, he'll still introduce the bill.

"If it's the right thing to do, we need to do it whether there's an outcry or not," Haynes said.

According to Casey Anthony's defense team, Casey didn't report her daughter missing during those first 31 days because she was already dead.