

SENATE BILL 1978

By Kyle

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-1-321, relative to official state reptiles.

WHEREAS, the bog turtle is North America's smallest turtle, measuring about the length of a human thumb; and

WHEREAS, the bog turtle is found in the State of Tennessee and is a testament to the unique biodiversity of this State; and

WHEREAS, bog turtles are divided into northern and southern populations, with the northern population listed as federally threatened in 1997; and

WHEREAS, in the past two decades, the bog turtle's southern population has also plummeted; and

WHEREAS, the bog turtle is one of the most imperiled turtles on the continent, its southern population declining by at least fifty percent in the past two decades and fewer than 2,000 bog turtles presently remaining; and

WHEREAS, bog turtles live in marshy wetlands that are being drained for development, and only 500 acres of mountain bog habitat remain across the turtles' entire southern range; and

WHEREAS, habitat destruction and poaching are the primary causes of the bog turtles' steep population decline; and

WHEREAS, protecting bog turtles is in the interest of all Tennesseans and requires swift action and increased public awareness; now, therefore,

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

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 4-1-321, is amended by deleting the section and substituting instead the following:

The official state reptiles of this state are:

- (1) The widespread eastern box turtle, *Terrapene carolina*; and
- (2) The bog turtle, *Glyptemys muhlenbergii*.

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.