



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Protecting Unwanted Infants

JEFFREY D. KLEIN June 25, 2010

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Senate and Assembly Pass Klein Bill to Extend Safeguards for Abandoned Babies and Distressed Parents

State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) announced on Thursday that the NYS Senate passed his legislation to give parents more time to safely give up unwanted newborns and protect parents from criminal liability. Klein's bill (S.2950D/NYS Assembly same-as A. 11111) would better implement the Abandoned Infant Protection Act of 2000 by extending the time parents are allowed to safely abandon infants to 30 days and by eliminating criminal prosecution against parents who abandon their child as prescribed by law.

"This legislation has one objective - to keep vulnerable and innocent newborns safe from harm and ensure they are protected in their early days of life. By extending the safe haven time frame and removing the threat of prosecution, we not only safeguard the health and welfare of hundreds of infants but undoubtedly will save lives," said State Senator and Deputy Majority Leader Jeffrey D. Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester).

New York State was one of the first states to enact the Abandoned Infant Protection Act - commonly called the Safe Haven Act - to prevent individuals from abandoning an infant up to five days old. Currently, all 50 states have laws that designate specific locations as safe places for parents to relinquish their unharmed newborns safely, legally, and anonymously.

“There are many reasons people feel desperate enough to abandon a baby, including pregnancy-related depression and financial instability. This legislation will protect fearful parents who feel they have no option other than abandonment, but who compassionately deliver their child to a safe haven to protect them from harm,” said Assemblywoman Amy Paulin (D-Westchester).

Klein's legislation amends the law in two important ways. First, the bill eliminates the criminal liability against an individual who safely hands his or her child over under the provisions of the law and second, it increases the age a child can be left from up to five days old to 30 days or younger. This legislation has the support of multiple organizations, including the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV), the New York State Bar Association, the Legal Aid Society, the New York State Catholic Conference, National Organization for Women – New York City and Hale House Center. This bill passed the Assembly earlier this month.

To date, approximately 140 abandoned infants in New York State have been placed with adoptive families and 139 birthmothers pursued lawful anonymous relinquishments.