University of Tennessee football fans wouldn’t be likely to wave Confederate flags at Saturday’s Ole Miss game anyway.

But Ole Miss fans traditionally have displayed the flags at games for years.

UT student leaders are trying to discourage the use of the controversial symbol in Neyland Stadium, where the Vols and the Rebels play at 3:30 p.m.

UT’s Student Senate unanimously agreed Tuesday to support the plea by Ole Miss Coach Tommy Tuberville to keep the flag out of the Rebels’ games.

”The Rebel flag means a lot of things to everybody, but to a large part of our student body at UT it is a symbol of oppression and hatred,” said Student Government President James Kirkland.

For a Civil War heritage group in Knoxville, though, the Confederate battle flag symbolizes the South trying to resist an invasion by the North, not a struggle over slavery.

”This has nothing to do with race,” said Dave Jones, a member of Knoxville’s chapter of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans.

”It has everything to do with the right to present a symbol that honorable and brave men fought under,” Jones said.

This is another round in the national debate over what the Confederate flag means, and whether the Rebel image should be displayed on government offices and uniforms, license plates or school mascots.

The flag has been blamed by coaches as impeding recruitment of black athletes.

Tuberville’s plea didn’t stop Ole Miss fans last week from waving the flag during a game against Vanderbilt.

Tuesday’s action by UT student leaders is a sign of support for students and alumni who are offended by the Rebel flag, not an attack on free speech, Kirkland said.

It is also a way to show respect for Tuberville’s stance, said student Laura Lee Rappe, sponsor of the action.

Said Jones, ”They are missing the boat. It’s a symbol of the war for Southern independence.”

Kirkland isn’t sure of the effect of the Student Senate’s action.

”I don’t know if it’s going to change anything at all,” Kirkland said.

”It’s going to make some people angry.”