

From:

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To the committee:

The change I am advocating for is for fit, willing and able parents to share custody when temporary orders are issued in Kansas divorce cases. SB 157 accomplishes that and is in the best interests of children and families in Kansas.

Some have argued that shared parenting isn't what's best for children. They argue that children living in two different residences is "tough" on the children. They have argued this without providing any evidence. The simple fact is children like shared parenting and it's shown through studies to be beneficial to them. One of the many benefits is that kids get to see two different approaches to life. They learn there is more than one way to solve a problem. They have two parents looking out for their best interest, not just one who is a dictator.

I know this from my kids and my own experience. My kids get to see both parents every other week. They are comfortable with splitting their time between houses. They've learned that two birthdays and two Christmas's are better than one. They've learned that mom and dad don't have to do things the same way. They have natural love for both parents and shared parenting allows them the time needed to develop that bond with each parent. Shared parenting doesn't force them to chose one parent over the other.

Opponents to shared parenting have also said that shared parenting will endanger children by giving more time to parents that are abusers. Nothing is further from the truth. Shared parenting advocates have never or will advocate for giving more time to individuals who present a real threat to children.

The one thing I have not heard the opponents discuss is their conflict of interest. When your income is dependent on people being in conflict, of course you will oppose a change that will reduce conflict. This however is what is best for the lawyers and others who profit from conflict, it is not what is best for the children.

This simple change will stop the "race to the courthouse" and reduce the hostility in many cases. This would give children an equal opportunity to continue their natural bond with both parents. Over 54 scientific studies have confirmed that this approach is best for children of all ages, including infants. The studies showed that the benefit of this approach is even seen with parents that are in high-conflict situations.

Over 20 states are in the process of changing custody laws or are considering that change. Last year Kentucky passed the first full shared parenting law requiring shared parenting in both temporary and permanent orders for fit, willing and able parents. Arizona has also passed some legislation and positive effects are being seen in that state. Texas and Missouri are both in process of proposing changes to their laws.

Research in Kansas has shown that this approach is overwhelmingly favored by the voters with only 2% objecting. Today's current Kansas divorce law no longer reflects the realities for the Kansas families it's serving, and we need to change that. Please vote to move SB 157 to a vote on the floor.

We all want the best for our fellow Kansans. I appreciate your time in helping Kansan families!

Sincerely,

Chris Batcheller
National Parents Organization, Kansas Chapter