



WisconsinFathers.org

The best parent is both parents

Wisconsin
Fathers for
Children
and Families



Men's Briefs! The starter's gun has fired and it's full steam ahead. January 3rd saw the inauguration of the Assembly, the Senate and a new Governor. The Wisconsin State Legislature web pages have all been updated with your district representatives and their contact details. Also, January 10th saw the installation of the Board of WFCF for another year and we'd like to welcome Mike May as a new Board member, responsible for the coordination of volunteers.

We look forward to a productive year. It would be a great achievement if we were so successful in implementing a fair, respectful and equal process of

family law that Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families no longer needed to exist.

I know it's a dream, but maybe one day family court can actually live up to its name and rather than separating parents from their children, it will help parents to remain actively involved in their children's lives.

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STOP THE PRESSES

Representative Don Pridemore's Equal Placement Bill will be released for Co-Sponsorship on Wednesday 2nd February!

STOP THE PRESSES



President's Perspective – the Way it Works

We've got two years before it all changes again. On the first Tuesday in November of 2012, we'll be back at the election booths choosing all of our 99 Assembly persons again and the other half of our Senators. Between now and then, there is about 18 months worth of work to do. The last six months before elections most legislative activity stops as candidates deal with trying to get elected or re-elected.

The process of getting something into law takes time. As has been explained to me and actually makes sense, not

only is it good to make good law, but it's necessary to stop bad law. There are many situations of "the unintended consequences", so it's better to go slow and thoroughly. There are three outcomes that can occur. 1) A bill gets a majority yes vote at each stage it passes through and becomes law. This is a good thing. 2) A bill gets a no vote at any stage and is thrown out. This is a strong signal that it's a bad law and don't bother bringing it back again. 3) A bill will stall and "die in committee". This means it is not made into law, but it is an indication that it's a good idea, it just needs some

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tweaking to get it over the step in the process that someone doesn't like about it. Although this does not achieve the desired (family) law reform, it does mean we keep trying and maybe with a slight tweak and a different political make-up due to elections, it will eventually be successful.

The first step in the process is the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB) drafts laws - under direction of Legislator(s) who describe their intent, (which is under direction of the citizens who believe the current laws do not reflect the public's intent - or Public Policy). Sometimes this is very difficult because after years of tweaking, eventually the law becomes a convoluted form of "spaghetti" law, and changes can generate unintended consequences. Imagine what a rocket engine would look like if the engineers continued to evolve the propeller engine. Fortunately, they cleared the slate and started with a completely new design. Unfortunately, that rarely happens in (family) law reform.

Finding a Legislator to author the LRB draft, who supports this Public Policy, is an important part of this step and the best author is the chairperson of the committee the bill will proceed to. The end of this step is an LRB draft which is allocated a number. This draft may go back and forth, with consultation with other legislators until the wording is in a form that has a good chance of passing (amendments may occur through the process but it is best to get the wording as "passable" as possible from the beginning). This is a very important point.

The bill is then introduced into a house, usually the Assembly. It is read once, allocated a bill number and

assigned to one or more committees for investigation. In our desire for family law reform, we would expect the bill to be assigned to the Children and Families committee.

The bill will be circulated for co-sponsors. This will be the time when we will call on you (and for you to call on your neighbors, work colleagues, relatives etc) to write, phone and email your legislators to urge them to join as co-sponsors. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of this step in the process.

The bill will then be sent to the committee best suited to review the bill. Eventually the committee chair will announce the hearing time and date and we turn up to testify to our elected representatives. This is the time we speak our piece to convince the committee that this is either a good bill we want to get passed or a bad bill we want to stop.

Eventually the committee will hold an "executive session" where the Bill will be voted on by the committee and recommended back to the full Assembly. In committee, the chair will only bring a bill up for an executive session vote if the chair agrees with it and he/she has enough committee members to get a majority yes vote. If the chair does not like the bill or he/she does not have enough support from his fellow committee members, the bill may never have a hearing date posted or never get an executive session vote, so the bill will "die in committee".

With a successful vote by the full Assembly, the bill will then be passed to the Senate for the same process. If successful in the Senate, the bill will be sent to the Governor's office for signing or vetoing.



The Annual Meeting – by Tom Pfeiffer

Earlier this month, we gathered in Madison to a packed room for the WFCF Annual meeting. It was great to see so many old faces – and new ones as well. The opening presentation by our President has been posted on the home page of our website for your interest. We had very heartfelt and passionate speeches from both Representative Don Pridemore and Representative Steve Kestell. Representative Pridemore detailed his Equal Placement Bill and Representative Kestell detailed his Move-Away Bill.

Both these bills will be going forward and the time will soon be critical to contact your legislators to sign on to these important bills as co-sponsors.

The existing Board was voted to remain the same with the addition of Mike May as volunteer coordinator.

I'd personally like to thank those many members who attended, who generously made donations to our Treasury. Without your help, we cannot continue to educate our legislators to the abuse done to our children when the courts purposefully make one parent a minor parent, enabling the other parent in a primary position, to vindictively alienate and damage the child's relationship with the minor parent – usually the Father.



Public Policy – by Peter Kerr

Public Policy has raised its head again this month with the way the courts interpret Wisconsin law. The appeals case of Mike May (our newly elected board member) has been submitted to the Supreme Court for clarification. (The Supreme Court has yet to accept the case) Our current board member and treasurer, Mike Landwehr, took his case of “maximize placement” to the Supreme Court in 2007, which I have commented on before and I’m sure, will do again. Back then, my daughter was seven years old and strangely, her definition of “maximize placement” was different from the Supreme Court’s definition!

In a previous Supreme Court case of Frisch vs. Henrichs it was determined that it was against public policy to set a “ceiling” on child support, which basically says that parents cannot stipulate to a fixed child support amount over a long period of time. (Of course the definition of “long” is subjective, however the child support agency – written into law – believes that a review of child support is warranted after 33 months, just in case a parent has received a pay raise and child support should be recalculated based on that).

But leaving the time period out of it, common sense tells us that if one parent wins the lottery, sharing that around in a form that benefits the child at both houses, should not be limited by a predetermined, fixed ceiling.

The Mike May case is about a “floor” and whether it’s against public policy to set a “floor” on child support. Of course, again common sense should tell us that if a parent loses their job, maintaining the fixed child support amount of \$1203 per month, from an unemployment compensation amount of \$1600 per month (\$1,360 after taxes), leaving the Father only \$157 to live on, pick up the kids, feed, cloth, house, heat and interact in a quality way equal to the other parent’s capabilities (who is receiving the child support!) would be against public policy.

Before I comment any more on this situation, I do need to do some more vital research – I’ll ask my now 10 year old!

Lucky Pete and Honest John

It’s all quiet on the Western Front for Honest John. His delayed hearing for a temporary order to set placement is due in February. I really like the way Honest John has studied the situation and is very clear in his direction. He has made no doubt about how it needs to work for the house of cards to stay up, and has made it very clear that any greed on either side would cause the house of cards to fall and that he is not scared to exist in that situation as he is the Father of his children and will remain that way forever.

Lucky Pete is not in the same situation. He is dealing with the might and weight of the whole corrupt court system. The planned physically violent attack by his violent S2BX, has manifested it’s way (through VAWA funding) to the criminal court where Lucky Pete has been charged with criminal violence and his S2BX let off scot-free, without question, and conveniently slotted into “victim” status, even though the evidence provided on public record by the arresting police officer was that

there were marks (bruises) on Lucky Pete, but none on the S2BX.

Under enormous pressure to resolve this case at the eleventh hour before trial, a plea deal was struck where if Lucky Pete keeps his nose clean for 12 months, it all goes away.

Editor’s Note: Well before any “milestone” event in proceedings, you need to analyze your situation and make a decision on your direction. Because, you can guarantee, that at the eleventh hour, pressure will be put on to compromise and accept a “deal” to resolve the situation. There will be an enormous amount of pressure applied. Most of these “deals” are for the benefit of the attorneys and court, and are not of any benefit to you. And even though you may have made the deal under duress, any time your stipulation causes you trouble in the future, the court, judges and attorneys will lay it all back on you and say “But it was you who chose that situation”.

Member's Feedback – from Jim Novak WFCF Founder

I'd like to compliment WFCF on the e-Mail edition of Men's Briefs. It's good and fast, and inexpensive to get out.

There is a history written up, don't exactly know where it is, but Bill's [Bill Fetzner – Co-Founder and past President of FEJ/WFCF] power point presentation outlines many high points, and shows a 20+-year progression. These can be used for the web site, even if in bullet form.

Perhaps one of the reasons why there are fewer volunteers is because ultimately far fewer fathers are getting screwed with the legal and rule changes, along with the education of court professionals including judges as regards the role of fathers at divorce. I know from Keith Wessel that this is the case from his caseloads. This does not mean that there are not some fathers still feeling gender bias in some jurisdictions or some in all jurisdictions, but the case numbers are fewer. Our educational efforts have worked. More, with two incomes needed to be middle class, women have changed; sole placement is a burden for them, not a moneymaker. It is not just a matter of a change in gender roles in just mothers or just fathers, but both have changed. This makes for less litigation.

I used to do 2 hours sessions of "How to Win Custody." I would demand that the clients buy and read my book, "The Wisconsin Fathers Guide" before I would see them so we didn't waste their time or money. The importance of the book is that for \$20 you get what would cost 3 hours of attorney's time to learn, a good cost benefit ratio. Moreover, power shifts to the father who learns

how to find information instead of to attorneys who spoon-feed the dad at \$200 per hour.

I put in tens of thousands of hours on the all-dads line over 15 years. I would never give an attorney referral unless the caller became a member. @#\$% them if they won't spend \$30 to support WFCF while putting down a \$3000 retainer for an attorney they know nothing about, in fact an attorney which might be worse than having no attorney.

Many of us "members" have retired from WFCF, but did so, 5, 10, 15 years after our personal case was settled. We did so in many cases since it is time for those whose lives as fathers are threatened to step up to the plate. One of my fears on handing over the presidency and leaving the board after 15 years, was that the organization would flounder and that all the efforts we original founders put into WFCF would be lost. It has continued, many times not how I would have envisioned its future, but according to the vision and energies of new leaders. I overcame those fears by thinking that if WFCF died, then it would have served its purpose for the time that it existed. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all father's got a fair shake under Wisconsin law, there really would be no need for WFCF to exist except as perhaps a psychological support group.

Editor's Note: James Novak is a Co-Founder and past President of WFCF and one of the most dynamic workers in WFCF history. His book "The Wisconsin Father's Guide to Divorce & Custody" is still absolutely relevant today and is in nearly every library in Wisconsin or available on Amazon.com.

[Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families](#) is a Statewide 501(c)(3) organization fulfilling the function of parental support in difficult times. Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families (WFCF) provides educational outreach programs to help guide parents through the challenging times of parental separation. We offer [email helpline](#) communication, our (608) ALL-DADS phone support, and our WFCF Chat site – a text based messaging system that enables the exchange of ideas and questions to be answered by our counselors.

WFCF also holds monthly Father's Night Out meetings across the state where parents can meet in a casual atmosphere for exchanging of experiences and help in future situations. These are extremely important events for anyone going through difficult times. They can "switch the light on" to what has been happening to you and therefore can help in guiding you on a better path to a stronger relationship with your children.

WFCF is committed to seeing that "Tomorrow's Parent" never has to go through what "Yesterday's Children" have suffered. We encourage the updating of Wisconsin Laws to guarantee that the child/parent bond can never be broken.

Our strength is in our members. "We the People" can make these changes, but we cannot do it without members. [Join up](#) and be in the driver's seat for the future of our children.

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