



WisconsinFathers.org

The best parent is both parents

Wisconsin
Fathers for
Children
and Families



Men's Briefs!

I've said this before and I'll be saying many times, just so it is understood very clearly. I am Australian – I don't vote Republican or Democrat! At the center of my radar screen is the well-being of children (of course including my own flesh and blood!) If your actions and rhetoric aligns with the WFCF goals, where a child's relationship with both parents are treated as just as important as each other, you will get positive exposure; if they don't and your actions and rhetoric are discriminatory and abusive to a child's relationship with either parent, you will get negative exposure. Like all things in this world, we make our choices and we must accept the consequences.

Well what an interesting start to the new legislative year! And something that personally thrills me – our new "NextGen" initiative. We are an educational 501(c)(3), so we are going to educate! We will be modeling "The Norse Star" High School initiative and contacting all Wisconsin High Schools to see if they have student newspapers and if they would like to participate in equality issue journalism. The next generation of voters needs to know what to expect from the laws and courts of Wisconsin when it comes to parenting their children. We'll start by requesting that all our legislators answer three simple questions:

Do you believe that a child's relationship with its Father is just as important as a child's relationship with its Mother?

Do you believe that a fit and healthy Father who wants to participate in the raising of their child is a good thing?

When both parents are fit and healthy and want to be involved with their child, that treating the child's relationship with both parents with respect, fairness and equality is in the "Best interests of the Child".

As you are also aware, we are slowly working our way through "educating" every Senator and Representative and with WFCF members as constituents in every legislative district, soon we should have a clear picture of who believes in fairness, respect and equality – and those that don't!

Remember, it's all about integrity – Who's got it and who hasn't!

In this edition we have:

The President's Perspective

The High School Newspaper – Tom Pfeiffer

An Update on Lucky Pete and Honest John

Members Feedback – from a Constituent



President's Perspective – Let's start sitting in the front of the bus!

How easy is this! "That a child's relationship with its fit and healthy Father is just as important as the child's relationship with its fit and healthy Mother".

Or let's turn it around. "A child's relationship with its Mother is more important than its relationship with its Father". That's like saying only whites are important enough to sit in front of the bus, or that Men's votes are more important than women's votes, or that Jews aren't important and the holocaust never existed.

Children need the flexibility to learn and grow from both parents. Only co-parenting and co-operation can achieve that.

How obvious is this! "How can a purposefully given unequal placement order, where one parent becomes the primary parent and vindictively uses this power to damage if not sever the child's relationship with the

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minor parent, ever be in the "Best Interests of the Child?"

Why would any Assembly member or Senator support laws, which so clearly enable the abuse of children? Well, let's ask them! They work for you, send them a letter and don't accept any "it's a complicated issue" as a response. As I've already said....

How easy is this! "That a child's relationship with its fit and healthy Father is just as important as the child's relationship with its fit and healthy Mother".

Integrity – Who's got it and who hasn't! – Stay tuned, because we're asking!



The Norse Star – High School Student Newspaper – by Tom Pfeiffer

The following is correspondence I had with Ryan Blaikie from Stoughton High School. Rather than describe it, I thought it just best to let you read it.

Hi, Mr. Pfeiffer,

*My name is Ryan Blaikie and I write for my high school's student newspaper, **The Norse Star**. This month we are reporting about interesting differences between the way men and women are treated in a variety of different environments (at school, in the workplace, etc.) I am investigating these differences in the area of law, including child custody. I was wondering if you would be able to give me some insight in an interview.*

And so ensued a phone conversation with Ryan:

Thanks for all your helpful information and interview last night! Here are the questions:

1. Please give a brief description of the procedure to determine physical placement of the parents.
2. In a typical custody/physical placement case, how are the mother and father treated differently? Is one given preference?
3. What are some consequences of this unequal treatment?
4. What does Wisconsin Fathers for Children and Families stand for? What are they trying to do to solve the issue?
5. Could you explain the nature of the Equal Placement Bill?

*Thanks again!
Ryan*

The article in the Stoughton High Schools' student newspaper "The Norse Star":

In a time when our society values equality for all, it may come as a surprise to know that discrimination can be found in the courtroom. The issue is in family disputes, typically after a divorce, when the father and mother must let the court determine who receives how much time with the children—a process called 'physical placement.'

While there are no written laws that give women an advantage in family courts in custody and placement disputes, courts are often biased in a variety of different ways towards women. Tom Pfeiffer, Executive Vice President of Wisconsin Fathers

for Children and Families (WFCF), explained how courts often give preference to women.

"Although there are exceptions to every rule, in general fathers get the short end of the stick in family court," Pfeiffer said in an email. "...This is perhaps the last great example in this country of gender discrimination."

Even before the placement of the children is officially determined, men experience pressure to leave the home and often get to spend less time with their children.

"Usually after the initial temporary court hearing the father is expected to leave the family home and set up a temporary residence," Pfeiffer said. "He is given at least some time with his children while things are being sorted out, but in so many of the cases I have seen, this is a marginal amount of time compared to what had been his norm before the action was initiated in the courts. Men are often fooled into thinking that this 'temporary' order is bearable because it won't last long."

However, many men never receive the rights to more time with their children following the final court order. More often than not, the mother is given the majority of the time, while the father is left with a marginal amount. This is largely due to the traditional view of mothers as the primary caregiver of the children.

"Mothers generally are awarded a significantly larger share of this time, which comes of course with a price tag for the father both financially and in his diminished role as a father to his children," Pfeiffer said. "My observations over many years following this process are that fathers typically are held to a higher standard than mothers in this process that determines time with their children. A father can be easily accused of harassing the mother and have a restraining order placed on him, which prevents him from having contact with the mother."

Mothers may also easily take advantage of the court system to manipulate the father or 'get even' with him. Since there is so much at stake in the process, and tensions naturally run high between splitting partners, this is not uncommon.

"Restraining orders are given out by the courts like candy at a parade, but only when mothers request them..." Pfeiffer said. "With a restraining order a mother can have an excuse

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for not letting the father see his kids. These are therefore often used as weapons in family court."

courts through education, lobbying and political activism—speaking to Senators and Representatives, and gaining their support for new legislation.

Often the dad simply settles for less time with his kids because of the social and especially financial pressure he is under. Attorney costs and "temporary" payments to the spouse soon add up. "It is not uncommon for a father... to be told that if he wants to prevent the large additional cost of a trial before a judge, he should simply settle for a placement schedule with the kids that gives him what is essentially 'visitor' status," Pfeiffer said.

"There wouldn't be a Dads of Wisconsin if both parents were treated equally," Blake said. "...We get very little support from mainstream media."

Studies have shown that a myriad of negative social consequences result from the absence of a father figure in a child's life, including lower grades and increased rates of teen pregnancies and drug use. "Both parents have significant, yet different contributions to give to the family," said Steve Blake, member of Dads of Wisconsin, in an interview. "Children need to have both role models in order to grow into well-rounded adults."

A new bill, called the Equal Placement Bill, is in the beginning stages of becoming a reality. "In short, the bill levels the playing field, holds judges and court officials more accountable in their decisions by making them state in writing why they would deviate from an equal placement standard, and gives parents an opportunity after the fact to change their lifestyles to better accommodate their desire to remain an actively involved parent," Pfeiffer said.

Several organizations, including WFCF and Dads of Wisconsin, are trying to combat unequal treatment in family

The future seems to be getting brighter for fathers in courts. "Men and women should have equal rights and equal access to their children. We are not there yet, but progress is being made, albeit slowly," Pfeiffer said.



Lucky Pete and Honest John

Honest John was front and center this month and I was unable to sit in the actual court room to hear the FCC give the temporary order of "Every Second Weekend and One Night through the Week" for Dad. The result!

are blessed that their parents realized there is no "Family" in Family Court!

Honest John and his now ex-wife came to an agreement hours before the initial hearing where a temporary placement order would have been issued. The agreement included equal placement of their children. They are now getting on with the next chapters in their lives and their children have both a Mom and Dad fully participating in their lives. I guess their three children

Lucky Pete is savoring his time by doing the best to bond and participate with his kids in his cookie-cutter disrespectful standard "Every second Weekend and one night through the week" temporary order placement schedule. It's been a rough couple of months for Lucky Pete, but he remembers the words of the policeman who sees these abominable tactics of false allegations being used in the "no-much-family-in" family court - "Never Give Up" and Lucky Pete is true to that advice.

Member's Feedback – from a constituent of Representative Gary Hebl

Back in the 2005-2006 legislative session, Assembly Bill AB897 was introduced by Representative Pridemore. It is the same bill as has just been released for co-sponsorship in the 2011-2012 legislative session – LRB-0611/1.

vindictive primary parent to damage, if not sever the child's relationship with its minor parent?

Representative Hebl voted NO to AB897.

"Overall, approximately 50% of mothers "see no value in the father`s continued contact with his children..." (Source: Surviving the Breakup, Joan Kelly & Judith Wallerstein, p. 125)

Why would Representative Hebl want to perpetuate a system that creates unequal placement and enables a

In a study: "Visitation Interference - A National Study" by Ms. J Annette Vanini, M.S.W. and Edward Nichols,

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M.S.W., it was found that 77% of non-custodial fathers are NOT able to "visit" their children, as ordered by the court, as a result of "visitation interference" perpetuated by the custodial parent.

to acquire workers authorization to work at my grandfather's restaurant. In addition, your brother, Tom, presided over my sister's marriage several years ago and oversaw signing the documents for my first home many years ago. I've known the Hebl name for a long time.

A New York judge, Hon. Richard Hunter, former chief judge of the King's County (Brooklyn) Family Court, and a prominent member of the New York State Commission on Child Support, made the following comments in "The Fathers Also Rise," New York Magazine, November, 18, 1985:

Currently, I manage a \$30+ million business in Johnson Creek while living in Sun Prairie.

"You have never seen a bigger pain in the ass than the father who wants to get involved: he can be repulsive. He wants to meet the kid after school at three o'clock, take the kid out to dinner during the week, have the kid on his own birthday, talk to the kid on the phone every evening, go to every open school night, take the kid away for a whole weekend so they can be alone together. This type of father is pathological."

You can hit the delete key on all of that, round file it, or whatever you like because it pales in comparison to a different matter which is near and dear to my heart. The matter that is of utmost importance to me personally is the unfair and unjust actions that regularly occur (and have occurred for decades) in the family court system. I use to view my own biological father as a "deadbeat dad" because he seemingly gave up on my siblings and I. However, I have a much different perspective after going through the family court system myself. The family court system is extremely biased and in my opinion violates many people's civil rights. It cost me \$50,000 to fight for a fair amount of time with my 2 children. It finally came down to the commissioner & judge seeing through what was going on and ruling in my favor. I'm lucky I had the wherewithal to fight the system... many fathers do not.

Source: Sedlak, Andrea J. and Diane D. Brodthurst. The Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect: Final Report. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. Washington, D.C., September 1996.

About 40 percent of children in father-absent homes have not seen their father at all during the past year.

Children need fathers. I'm absolutely convinced that many of the issues with society are rooted in the systematic removal of fathers from families. The statistics prove it and I don't need to recite them here. The point is that the current system is broken. This system goes against everything that was ever engrained in my mind about equality growing up in Sun Prairie and achieving high honors at the UW Madison College of engineering. This system is upside down with institutionalized sexism and it's time to fix it. Therefore, I urge you to co-sponsor Representative Pridemore's Equal Placement Draft.

Marygold S. Melli, *Child Custody in a Changing World: A Study of Postdivorce Arrangements in Wisconsin*

The equal time arrangement families appeared to have sorted out this arrangement fairly amicably. The unequal time families were much more likely to have reached such a compromise after protracted legal conflict. This group also had the highest incidence of returns to court of any of the custody arrangements in the study.

Another reason to support this draft is simply cost reductions which people obviously voted for in the last election. I don't know exactly how/if the bureaucrats in the family court system tie in with the state budget, but there is a great deal of fat that could be eliminated with an equal placement law. Furthermore, I suspect most judges themselves would welcome an equal placement law so that they wouldn't have to delve into the minutiae of family cases. Finally, another thing I've consistently been taught throughout my life in Wisconsin is that this is a very progressive state that wants to be a leader in the nation - heck it says "Forward" on the flag. My belief/pride in Wisconsin and these messages has diminished substantially over the last few years. However, I wholeheartedly believe that if Wisconsin was to pass an Equal Placement Law, it would put Wisconsin back on the map with respect to being a national leader and my kids would likely read about it in the history books.

With the current system, the laws of Wisconsin, on purpose, create a gatekeeper parent and a visitor parent. And if the animosity lasts long enough, then the visitor parent will run out of emotional resources and financial resources. You will end up with a fatherless child.

Following is a letter from one of our members, a constituent of Representative Gary Hebl.

Dear Gary,

Best Regards,

As you may be aware, I've sent you a number of messages through WMC relating to different business issues in state government. Also, you probably don't know that I've known Hebl & Hebl for 30+ years since I was a young boy who came to your office on Main Street in Sun Prairie

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[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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