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MARCH 4, 2016, 8:40 PM

## Iowa House Votes for New Bill Which Meets Parenting in the Middle

By: Jeffery Leving

Great strides towards the best interest of children in Iowa were made on Wednesday when the Iowa House voted to make a change in how custody is awarded in the event of marital separation or divorce. The bill requires a judge to award joint legal and physical custody to both parents unless it is found that the child or children are in direct physical or emotional harm.

In most scenarios, it is widely assumed that custody will be awarded to one parent or the other, largely the mother, placing the burden on one parent to either have to prove why they should be awarded custody or build a case against the other parent to prove why they should not. The former may as well be an application for sainthood and the latter often leads to acts of dishonesty, trickery, defamation of character, and more. Alternatively, the passing of this bill would provide both parents a fair and equal starting point similar to the notion of "innocent until proven guilty".

I applaud the Iowa House for recognizing what other state legislatures should have recognized all along. Divorce does not immediately equate to the loss of child custody; only to the loss of a spouse. Children are unnecessarily caught between games of spousal tug-o-war and used as pawns in matrimonial chess when really often times what they need the most is just the support of and relationships with both parents.

Fathers are undeniably an integral part in the upbringing of a child. Their value and contribution cannot be replaced. It is time that other states follow Iowa's progressive legislation supporting the equal involvement of both parents in raising children so fathers aren't kicked to the curb.

About Jeffery M. Leving

Jeffery M. Leving is an attorney and author based in the city of Chicago who advocates for fathers everywhere. He co-authored the Illinois Joint Custody Law and has made frequent appearances as an expert legal analyst and commentator on CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, FOX National News, and ABC News. Follow him on Twitter at @FathersMatter.



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