

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Steve Brunk at 9:05am on Wednesday, February 11, 2015, 346-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Don Hineman – Excused

Committee staff present:

Natalie Nelson, Legislative Research Department

Joanna Wochner, Legislative Research Department

Stephen Bainum, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant

Jason Long, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Dr. Glenn T. Stanton, Director of Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family

Teresa Collett, Professor, University of St. Thomas School of Law

Sherdeill H. Breathett, Sr.

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Bill introductions:

Representative Brett Hildabrand introduced a bill about consumer protection related to home ownership. It was received without exception.

Informational briefing:

Dr. Glenn T. Stanton presented testimony saying that in every way social, medical and psychological scientists know how to measure, it is consistently shown that marriage and marital longevity improves every important measure of well-being for men, women and children, compared with those who are single, divorced, remarried and cohabiting. He then presented several studies to prove that point. Dr. Glenn quoted several research articles indicating that the marital status of the parents matters for every important measure of child well-being. U.S. Census Bureau data shows that two married parents is significantly more than three times less likely to be living in poverty than a child living with either a single, divorced or cohabiting mother or both unmarried parents. A diverse group of scholars found that family break-down costs U.S. taxpayers at least \$112 billion each and every year. Dr. Stanton stood for questions from the Committee. ([Attachment 1](#))

Professor Teresa Collett spoke about the importance of legislative support for the formation and support of life-long marriages. Her testimony focused on the increasing harm done to our elderly by the increasing failure of Americans to enter into and maintain stable marriages. America is experiencing an unprecedented increase in the number of citizens over the age of 65. Simultaneous with this increase in older Americans is a decline in the number of people getting married and growth in the number of married couples obtaining divorces. The U.S. Senate Committee on Aging is among those who have expressed concern about this issue. With the shift away from marriage and the increasing number of marriages that end in divorce, the GAO anticipates increased reliance on Social Security and other

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public benefit programs. By increasing the number of couples who marry and stay married, Kansas can promote the well-being of its seniors while also reducing reliance upon public benefits programs. Professor Collett stood for questions from the Committee. ([Attachment 2](#))

Sheredeill H. Breathett, Sr. said that marriage is the foundation of our society. "I come as a practitioner of marriage. My journey did not begin with a good marriage. When my dad came around he was always drunk or soon to be drunk. All three of my sisters married into abusive relationships that ended in divorce. My two older brothers are in and out of jail. What made the difference in my life? I had a mentor who had a healthy marriage. Being exposed to my mentor and seeing the opportunities life had to offer took me to a whole new level. As a result I was able to provide somewhat of an example to my younger brother of what a healthy marriage looks like. He now is married and celebrating twenty-three (23) years of marital bliss. Please do all that is within your power to insure that every Kansan has access to good tools to navigate a healthy marriage. Sheredeill answered a few question from the Committee. ([Attachment 3](#))

Chairman Brunk advised the Committee that we would continue the informational meeting tomorrow.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.