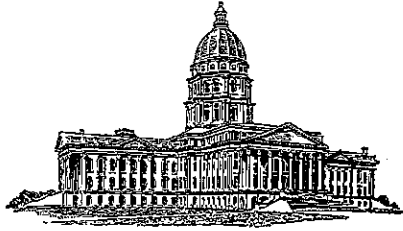


State of Kansas  
House of Representatives

State Capitol, 167-W  
Topeka, Kansas 66612  
(785) 296-7557  
eric.smith@house.ks.gov



627 Kennebec St.  
Burlington, Kansas 66839  
(620) 490-1458  
elsmith4hd76@gmail.com

Eric L. Smith  
Representative, 76th District

Committee:

I am Eric Smith and I have been a single father of 4 children for nearly 15 of the last 20 years. During that time I have had shared custody of those 4 children. Now, by 'shared' I mean that they lived with their mother and came to my house every other weekend, some holidays, and an occasional agreed upon day or two here and there.

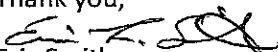
As a cop and as a security officer, my shifts were not set from 8-5, Monday through Friday. In fact, many of the weekends I had or was supposed to have my children, my schedule would have me working. This would mean that I would sometimes have to make other arrangements for my children so that they were not home alone. It also meant that I would not truly have 48 hours with them. I would have about 4-6 hours out of every two weeks to interact with my kids. But that was the way the routine divorce agreements read and, in my case, I would not have the facts on my side to depart from the presumed arrangement nor the money to fight the presumed parenting arrangement.

Additionally, this also meant that I would be paying for their insurance and child custody. This amounted to between \$900 and \$1,200 every month. This is a substantial amount taken from the paycheck of a single public servant. Everyone has in their mind that "it's for the kids." Yes, but as a father who would worry and fret over what I would feed my kids when they were with me, given that my grocery budget was very meager, it seemed very unfair that I paid very well for them to be with their mother and could not provide as well for them when they stayed with me.

My children are all grown, except for my baby, who is a senior in high school now. The toll is this: my children only know me as their father who they would visit occasionally and who would show up to games and plays and dance recitals, but not as a home. Their perspective is set by years of routine. A routine that did not involve lengthy stays with dad. A routine that rarely involved trips or vacations out of the area, due to expense. A routine that set my home up as a necessary departure from their 'norm'. This is the presumption of Kansas. That this situation is the best we can do to every family who separates in Kansas. That, unless you can afford the legal fees, you will be a part time dad.

I ask that you please consider changing Kansas law to a presumption of equal parenting time for the sake of a dad's right to be a more significant part of their children's lives. With so many fatherless homes, how can this not be the right thing to do?

Thank you,

  
Eric Smith