

Bill fixes child-custody flaws

For too many years, Pennsylvania's judiciary and lawyers have been running roughshod over the family courts. Judges' bias, discrimination, misinterpretation and wanton misapplication of law must be stopped. A change in child-custody laws is much needed to decrease litigation, define legislatively what is best for a child, remove some unchecked discretion of Common Pleas Court judges and assure equal rights for parents and their children.

Abuse of judicial discretion has allowed judges to physically and emotionally rip children and entire families apart. The criterion in the best interest of the child is now what a judge or psychologist say it is.

In many cases, unconstrained judges recklessly remove one parent from a child's life (93 percent of the time, it is fathers) without just cause and refuse to consider shared custody as a reasonable alternative.

The Pennsylvania Legislature is realizing that the family law system is broke and it needs to be fixed. The Common Pleas Courts must be given clear guidelines when determining custody matters. Addressing this issue is House Bill 2041, which is being sponsored by 21 bipartisan representatives. If enacted, this bill will give explicit guidance to the courts of what "the best interest of the child" truly means, will hold accountable those parents who refuse to build a co-parenting relationship, will reduce the psychological damage done to children,

ELECTION ISSUES

The Tribune-Democrat will not publish Readers' Forum letters about a candidate or issue later than April 20, the Tuesday before Election Day, unless we are convinced that rebuttal to a previous statement in the newspaper would be fair. We do not publish letters that do nothing more than endorse a candidate or list a candidate's background.

Please be prepared to substantiate and document any claims or statements in your letters. Opinions must be grounded in fact, not innuendo, rumor or supposition.

We make every effort to verify facts before running letters, but we simply cannot spend hours trying to authenticate claims made by partisan letter writers.

Letters submitted on or near deadline will be used on a first-come basis as space permits.

and will substantially reduce the animosity and cost of family law litigation by presuming parents will equally share legal and physical custody of their children.

Please support HB 2041 by signing the Pennsylvania Presumption of Joint Custody Petition online at www.pachildcustodyreform.com.

Robert G. Kearns Jr.

Holidaysburg R.R. 3