

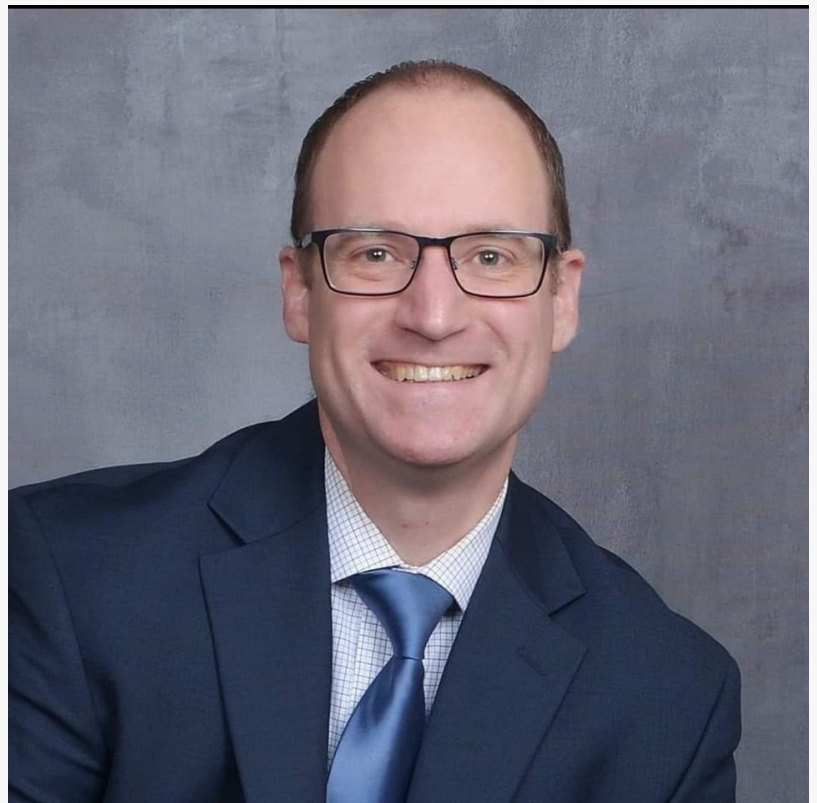
# Missouri passes landmark legislation setting 50/50 for child custody cases - first such change in 35 years

JEFFERSON CITY, MO, USA, May 22, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, as one of the very last bills passed in the 2023 regular legislative session, the Missouri General Assembly passed Senate Bill 35, setting 50/50 parenting time as the starting point for child custody decisions in Missouri.

In the first major change in Missouri child custody law since 1988, the new law states, "There shall be a rebuttable presumption that an award of equal or approximately equal parenting time to each parent is in the best interests of the child." It was passed by a vote of 114 yeas, 9 noes and 29 present in the Missouri House and 30 yeas and 2 noes in the Missouri Senate.

The organization driving the language and volunteer lobbying efforts for the bill, Americans for Equal Shared Parenting (AFESP) along with two supporting organizations, National Parents Organization (NPO) and The Fathers' Rights Movement (TFRM) have been working on this new law for eight years. The first success came in 2016 when a law was enacted requiring courts to enter facts, findings and conclusions of law in its judgments awarding custody. Today's landmark legislation is seen as a follow up to that effort and is the national model for equal shared parenting legislation.

States such as Arkansas, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Georgia, Michigan, Oklahoma, South Dakota and many more, drafted legislation deriving key elements from Missouri's national model with cooperation from AFESP.



For media inquiries and interview requests contact Attorney Jeff Millar

The team at AFESP consisted of Executive Director Mark Ludwig, Linda Jones, Legislative Director Jeremy Roberts, and attorney Jeffrey Millar. Mr. Millar explained, "Lawyers now have the tools to help kids in Missouri achieve their best results. Setting 50/50 as the starting point for child custody cases will not only achieve consistency across the state, but the new law also has a provision encouraging judges to enter a temporary parenting plan early in the case. The court can then quickly monitor how the parents are adjusting to separate lives, set early expectations and guidelines regarding cooperation pertaining to their child(ren). The bottom line is that today, by removing the adversarial, winner-take-all approach to child custody, and removing mechanisms which force children to choose one legally fit and willing parent over the other - children win."

Jeremy Roberts had this to say: "This is well-overdue reform. Many wonderful people came from all over Missouri to make this happen, including those who came to the Capitol each year to testify. Past legislators such as Representatives Kathryn Swan and Dr. Jim Neely and past Senators Wayne Wallingford and the late Senator Ed Emery must also be noted for their efforts. Current legislators, Representative Jim Murphy, Senators Rick Brattin and Karla May were at the center of this year's legislation. The hero of the day was Rep. Jim Murphy who's efforts kept SB35 in the forefront with House leadership. It wasn't until the final hour of the legislative session that his persistence on this highly demanded legislation paid off with the passage of the bill. It has been an absolute privilege to work alongside him throughout the session and witness his efforts today in achieving this monumental and ground-breaking new law for Missouri's children."

Senate Bill 35 also contains provisions which provides additional due process for driver license suspensions for those in arrearage on child support. A serious illness or an understandable inability to pay the ordered amount will now be taken into consideration prior to the state taking enforcement action. The bill is now on the Governor's desk for his signature and once signed, will take effect August 28, 2023. The organization will now focus its efforts, going forward, on continuing to update Missouri's family laws by terminating child support at the age of eighteen and pursuing fundamental Guardian ad Litem (GAL) reform.

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