



Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 17, 2012
10am DCFS Iberville Building 1-127

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 AM

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called with the following results:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Gordon Atwell
Heather Doss
Peggy Gehbauer
David Helveston
Rep. Frank Hoffman
Michael Johnson
Dale Hoffpauir for Gene Mills
Sue Morrill
Audrey Pugh
Dorothy Wallis

MEMBERS ABSENT

Lisa Andry
Sen. Sharon Weston Broome
Neil Bernard
A. G. Crowe
Penny Dastugue
Wayne DuBose
Daniel Kirk
Fred Lowery
Tony Perkins
Fred Selby
Tiffany Simpson
Katherine Spaht

OTHERS PRESENT

Don Wallis

III. BUSINESS CONSIDERED

A quorum was not present so the last meeting minutes could not be adopted.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Heather Doss presided and called the meeting to order.

Audrey Pugh spoke on Family Issues subcommittee. Nationwide research continues.

Dorothy Wallis says education on relationships and sex education is effective. Ask the students where the students want to be in five years. What happens to ones goals and dreams if there is an out of wed lock pregnancy?

There is funding available through the governor or through the schools to present a curriculum. Go to the top 5 parishes. Ms. Wallis suggested Pointe Coupee since her organization has a location in that area.

A GoToMeeting was set up by Mike Johnson so Mike McManus, MarriageSavers President, could conference call in to the meeting.

A powerpoint was presented by Mr. McManus. A copy of the handout is included with these meeting minutes.

There is new divorce data for Louisiana. It has a 50.5 percent divorce rate. This information was gathered through the American Community Survey during the Census.

The Heritage Foundation gathered statistics. It found that per divorce, the state spends \$20,000.

Mr. McManus wants to cut the divorce rate and cohabitation rate which has also escalated.

The marriage rate has come down even though the population rate grew slightly.

People are living together to test the relationship. Mr. McManus believes you can not practice permanence.

Mr. McManus' goal is to cut the divorce rate.

He is promoting a Community Marriage Policy (CMP).

A couple would have 4 to 6 months of marriage preparation.

They would learn to resolve conflict and communicate better.

There would be an annual retreat. Mentors would be used to counsel the couple.

In 1998, mentor couples were trained.

A covenant marriage law was passed.

The couple agreed to seek professional help and go through marital counseling.

It has been studied and four out of five couples don't want the divorce.

The mentors would be someone who has been married before.

Half of the marriages involve step families.

Goals would need to be set.

An advisory committee would need to be created.

In Louisiana there are 53% Catholics and 29% percent Baptists. Mr. McManus suggests to ask the Catholic Archbishop and the Southern Baptist Executive Director to be involved.

Ask the committee to create the Community Marriage Policy in 10 to 15 parishes. Seek TANF funds to financially support 50% of the costs.

Appoint a director.

It would not be a lot of money. Possibly state government could fund half of the costs and churches could raise the rest.

Mike Johnson asked Mr. McManus how those waters would be navigated.

Mr. McManus said there is a legitimate secular purpose. This is not an endorsement of religion.

The Community Marriage Policy in general would appeal to the clergy. A subcommittee of the commission can work on it – those who are faith-based on the commission.

There would need to be an official endorsement of the CMPs.

Mr. McManus said this is not a political action at all. He has been writing about it for years.

Dorothy Wallis said regarding the TANF dollars, 21 million were taken away from Louisiana.

Mike Johnson let Mr. McManus know we are committed to it. Our next meeting we can go through the legal aspect.

Dorothy Wallis asked for model legislation.

Mr. McManus said Louisiana is not the first state considering a bill such as this.

Ms. Doss asked if anyone had anything else.

Dale Hoffpaur's said the Louisiana Family Forum is searching for the longest married Louisiana couple. Last year Louisiana had a couple married for 84 years. The gentleman passed away.

Applications need to be in by Feb. 9. They would like to put out a print ad with the couple's story.

Legislative session begins March 18. Pre-filing of bills will begin shortly before that.

Mike Johnson will check with Mr. McManus on a follow up conference date.

For Mr. McManus to fly to Louisiana, estimated costs would be \$2,500 for fees and expenses.

Save the date. The next meeting will be Feb. 7, 2012.

If Mr. McManus comes to Louisiana, pastors can be notified or an afternoon session can be held at a church. Or the commission meeting could possibly be on another day of the week.

Help us help the state. The financial information is great. It does have a budget impact on Louisiana.

Mr. Johnson said the statistical information and costs will give us light to navigate.

Heather Doss adjourned the meeting at 11:20 AM.



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December 19, 2011

To: **Mike Johnson**
Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family

Fm: **Mike McManus, President**
Marriage Savers

Marriage Savers -- Louisiana Proposal

New Divorce Data for Louisiana

Louisiana is among six states that do not collect divorce data (including CA, MN, IN, HI and GA). So you have had no idea what the state's divorce rate is. Therefore, the Census added questions to its American Community Survey asking 2.2 million households each year if anyone got married or divorced in the past year. (This is a huge sample; Gallup predicts a Presidential race by interviewing 1,000 people.) The result is we now know Louisiana had 18,175 divorces in 2008 compared to 36,000 marriages, for a divorce rate of 50.5. The good news is that this is slightly below the U.S. divorce rate of 54.6%, according to Census.

Marriage is Disintegrating

Nationally, however, marriage is disintegrating. A new Pew Research Center analysis of the Census data reports that barely half (51%) of all Americans over age 18 are married, compared to 72% in 1960. And the number getting married dropped another 5% in 2010, down to 2.1 million from 2.2 million in 2009. By contrast, the percentage of never-married Americans doubled from 15% in 1960 to 28% in 2010. A Pew survey reports that 39% of Americans say that marriage is "becoming obsolete." However, 46% of unmarried adults say they want to marry, whether they think marriage is becoming obsolete, or not.

Here's more data on the steep decline of marriage in America:

- **The marriage rate has plunged 53%** since 1970, 30% just since 1990. (LA's marriages fell 29% since 1990 while population grew 5%.)

- **Divorces tripled** from 1960-1979 and remained over a million a year ever since; they declined slightly from 1990-2007, but jumped sharply to 1.24 million in 2008, according to that new Census study.
- **Cohabitation has soared 17-fold** from 430,000 in 1960 to 7.5 million in 2010, which is more than triple the 2.1 million marriages a year.
- **Unwed births jumped 8-fold** from 5% to 41% of all births, more than half of whom are born to cohabiting couples.

Consequences of Divorce & Cohabitation

America's divorce rate is triple that of Britain or France – 23% of all U.S. marriages end in divorce in only five years vs. 8% in those countries. Yet cohabitation is a bigger problem. Nearly twice as many American kids will live in a cohabiting household compared to a home whose parents have divorced – 42% will live with a cohabiting parent vs. 23% who experience a parental divorce. The result? Family Research Council estimates that only 46% of American teenagers are living with their own married parents.

Children of divorce are three times as likely to be expelled from school or get pregnant as teenagers as a child from an intact home. They are five times more likely to live in poverty. Such children are also more apt to suffer physical abuse. “Children of divorced or never-married mothers are six to 30 times more likely to suffer from serious child abuse than are children raised by both biological parents,” according to a Heritage Foundation report, “Marriage: The Safest Place for Women and Children,” by Patrick Fagan and Kirk Johnson. Another Heritage study reports that children of divorce are 12 times more likely to be jailed than those from intact homes, and children of non-marriage are 22 times more apt to be incarcerated.

No wonder American kids perform poorly in international academic comparisons. Their shattered home lives diminish their capacity to learn and develop. *TIME* reports that U.S. kids score 487 on math tests compared to 540 to 600 by Asian kids in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai. Why? *TIME* doesn't say, but Asian families are largely intact, while Americans are mostly broken. Only 2% of Japanese children are born out of wedlock, vs. 41% in the U.S.

Statistics do not reveal the pain of divorce for children. Michael Reagan, the adopted son of Ronald Reagan and Jane Wyman, wrote about his parents' divorce in *Twice Adopted*:

“Divorce is where two adults take everything that matters to a child – the child's home, family, security, and sense of being loved and protected – and they smash it all up, leave it in ruins on the floor, then walk out and leave the child to clean up the mess.”

Ironically, Michael's father, as Governor of California in 1969, signed America's first No Fault Divorce Law swept through state legislatures into law in less than a decade. While divorces nearly doubled in the 1960s, they soared another 86 percent from 639,000 in 1969 to 1,189,000 by 1980. President Reagan later told Michael that his signing the first No Fault Divorce Law was his "greatest regret" in public life.

Restoring Marriage In Louisiana: Three Suggested Strategies for the Marriage Commission

What can be done to reverse these trends? I suggest that the Marriage Commission consider three new strategies:

1. **Help houses of worship do a better job preparing, enriching and restoring marriages.**

Marriage Savers, a non-profit organization my wife and I created, has worked with more than 10,000 churches to create 229 **Community Marriage Policies** in which pastors in a city or county across denominational lines, collaborate to strengthen marriage. Clergy pledge to make marriage a high priority in their churches and invite **Marriage Savers** to train couples in healthy marriages to be Marriage Mentors to implement pastoral reforms at five stages of marriage:

- **Prepare couples for marriage** by requiring four months of rigorous marriage preparation that involves taking a premarital inventory such as **PREPARE/ENRICH** to give them an objective view of their strengths as a couple and where they need to grow - and meeting with trained Mentor Couples to discuss their assessment results. Marriage Savers trains couples in long-term marriages to be Marriage Mentors, who review their responses to the inventory and teach conflict resolution skills. P/E asks premarital couples whether they agree or disagree with 150 Items such as:
 1. Sometimes I wish my partner were more careful about spending money.
 2. When we are having a problem, my partner refuses to talk about it.
 3. My partner is too involved with or influenced by his/her family.
- **Enrich existing marriages** with an annual event using such tools as **10 Great Dates**, a DVD series that might be shown over 10 Friday nights on such issues as “Resolving Honest Conflict” or “Becoming an Encourager.” Couples then go on a date to discuss the topic, aided by a paperback book. There are many other enrichment materials churches can use: **Fireproof, Love & Respect** by Emerson Eggerich, **The Five Love Languages** by Gary Chapman, etc.
- **Save marriages in crisis** by training couples whose marriages nearly failed, to share their story of recovery with a couple in a troubled marriage. Mentors can also use a 5-part DVD (and workbook) series, **Choosing Wisely Before you Divorce** to help the couple rebuild their marriage. Another important tool is **PREPARE/ENRICH**, which has four recommended Exercises for Conflicted Couples. The assessment reveals strengths that the couple has overlooked, as well as agreements within their low-scoring categories. Discovering “strengths” gives discouraged couples hope. Marriage Savers trains Mentor Couples to help couples in crisis to improve their relationship. with such exercises as Create a Wish List, Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict, Taking a Time-Out

and Seeking and Granting Forgiveness. These Exercises offer practical ways to positively re-shape their relationship.

- **Help the separated to reconcile** by assisting the spouse trying to save the marriage when a mate wants a divorce, with a 12-week workbook course, **Marriage 911**, taken with a same gender Support Partner. There is *Support Partner Handbook* for the friend, to know what questions to ask each week. The “reconciling spouse” completes the workbook and reads recommended Scripture passages.
- **Help stepfamilies**, who typically divorce at a 70% rate - be successful parents and partners in four out of five cases, by creating **Stepfamily Support Groups** which meet biweekly. Couples learn from peers how to make such marriages work, saving 80% of them – the mirror opposite of what the culture offers.

RESULTS of Community Marriage Policies

An independent study of Community Marriage Policies (CMPs) by the Institute for Research & Evaluation, reported striking results:

- A. Divorce rates fall 17.5% in CMP cities** in seven years, and nearly a tenth have slashed divorce rates 48% to 70%: such as Austin, Kansas City, KS and its suburbs, Salem, OR, Modesto, CA, El Paso, etc. (As you know, the divorce rate in Shreveport fell 30% in one year, because Nancy Victory did such a great job organizing churches to participate.) Nationally, CMPs have helped couples save about 100,000 divorces that would have ended in divorce.
- B. Cohabitation rates fell by one-third** in CMP cities compared to carefully matched cities in each state without a CMP
- C. Marriage rates are rising** in some cities, such as Evansville, IN, up 16%; Modesto’s marriages doubled from 1,300 a year to 2,600, though that was partly due to rising population.

Conclusion

The Marriage Commission could help every city or parish create a Community Marriage Policy that can reduce divorce and cohabitation and perhaps raise the marriage rate.

How? We recommend that the Marriage Commission invite the Catholic Archbishop of New Orleans and the Executive Director of the Southern Baptist Convention to co-chair a Louisiana Advisory Board of Religious Leaders to develop a plan to create Community Marriage Policies in each city/county over the next two years. Together their churches are attended by 70% of Louisianans. All other state religious leaders ought to be invited to serve, such as the United Methodist Bishop, President of the Assemblies of God, etc. The Board can name Co-Chairs for each county. A modest stipend might be provided for a two-person staff to direct this

project, perhaps \$100,000 from TANF funds. The Welfare Reform Law, which reduced the number of people on welfare, states, "In enacting TANF, Congress articulated a desire for a program that encouraged two-parent families and marriage. The four purposes for TANF (as stated by the law) are:

- "1. to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
- "2. to end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.
- "3. to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies, and
- "4. to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families."

Clearly, three out of four purposes of the law are to **strengthen marriage** to "end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits...to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock births...and create "two parent families." Has Louisiana spent TANF money to promote marriage?

Marriage Savers could serve as a consultant to the Advisory Board and provide the training for clergy and Marriage Mentors. Normally, we are invited to speak at the signing of a Community Marriage Policy, which we suggest be at 1 p.m. on a Friday, so that it sparks maximum press and TV coverage. We then train clergy and Mentor Couples from 6:30 to 10 pm that Friday and from 8:30 to 5 pm on Saturday.

2. **Two Strategies for Louisiana to Reform No Fault Divorce**

Part of America's divorce problem is the law which allows one spouse to unilaterally divorce the other, though they jointly entered into marriage. There are too many divorces as a result, two-thirds of which are by couples who are no more unhappy than couples whose marriage survive. Here are two ways Louisiana could change the law so that it preserves -- rather than destroys, marriages:

Parental Divorce Reduction Act (PDRA)

A Coalition for Divorce Reform (<http://www.divorcereform.info>) is working with a number of state legislatures to consider legislation to require a **One-Year Period of Reconciliation and Reflection** for those seeking a divorce. If the couple has children, **both parents** would have to attend classes on the impact of divorce on kids **before filing**, and also to attend marriage education classes during the year. The reason most couples divorce is they do not know how to resolve conflict. These skills can be taught. This would be a big change for 25 states, such as TX, OK, RI and Maine, that require **no waiting for a divorce**. Nine such states have divorce rates that are 35% higher than those requiring a year's delay. Why? A year allows opportunity for reconciliation. Louisiana is the only state in America to have increased its period of

separation from six months to a year. However, my understanding is that present law in all states requires divorcing couples to move apart, which encourages one or both spouses to begin dating someone else. **The Parental Divorce Reduction Act** would allow couples to remain under the same roof, encouraging reconciliation. LA has no requirements for couples to take a course on the impact of divorce on children. Nor does it require couples to take classes to improve their conflict resolution skills. Adding those requirements should not be controversial. However, they would decrease the divorce rate dramatically. Divorce Coalition Director Chris Gersten predicts that if PDRA were adopted, divorces would drop by 40% to 50% in five years.

For more information, including legislative language, go to www.divorcereform/info.

Responsible Spouse Guidelines & Fit Parent

In four of five divorces one spouse opposes a divorce, yet No Fault Divorce law always allows one spouse to force the divorce on an unwilling partner. Arguably, No Fault is unconstitutional. Both the 5th and the 14th Amendments supposedly guarantee that “no person be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law.” How can there be “due process” if the person opposing divorce always loses? This proposal would allow either to file for divorce, but the person filing for divorce would get less child custody time and fewer family assets, as a result. If **Responsible Spouse Guidelines** are adopted as law, Louisiana would designate one person as the **Responsible Spouse** committed to saving the marriage who would **get 50% - 66% of child custody time, if desired, and 60% to 100% of family assets**, with a judge deciding the exact split. Why should a man who leaves his family for an affair and files for divorce, get 50% of family assets? This change would give the person trying to preserve the marriage leverage to press for preserving it. It would restore due process. Two-thirds of divorces are filed by women assuming they will get custody and most assets. How many would do so if the husband got the benefits? Obviously, many more couples would heal their marriages. What about cases in which one spouse is physically abusive or has committed adultery? In that case, if one spouse can be proven to have committed a major fault (adultery, abuse, abandonment, etc.), the person who files for divorce can be designated the **Responsible Spouse**.

Most parents care for their children and are **Fit Parents**. However, present law allows the non-custodial parent to see their children only every other weekend. **Responsible Spouse Guidelines** would more than double that time to five overnights out of 14 days. Most parents would be designated **Fit Parents**. That would more than double the access children have to their other parent.

This reform would add justice back to the system, penalizing the person who cheats on a spouse or who files for divorce. They would lose child custody time and family assets. Most important, it would give both spouses a significant voice on whether there should be a divorce, which is universally harmful to children. I believe it could also slash divorce rates in half.

For details on these ideas, I have attached an article I co-authored with Ron Grignol, an aerospace engineer and Dr. Michael Ross, an emergency physician who is now a consultant. Furthermore, if you took both steps, **Louisiana would be the model for all other states in reducing divorce**. Just as No Fault Divorce swept the country, **PDRA & Responsible Spouse**

legislation could do so as well. That would be a wonderful gift to 600,000 children, 6 million in a decade!

3. Subsidize Marriage, Not Cohabitation

A new study by the National Center for Family Formation reports that “the most common family formation experience was cohabitation.” Yet churches, who prepare 86% of couples for marriage, have no idea how to address this issue. I have asked hundreds of pastors, “Have you preached on cohabitation?” Only one hand in 50 goes up. That is evidence they are avoiding the issue, which they often view as hopeless. A recent report by the Institute for American Values, “Why Marriage Matters,” reports that the rise of cohabitation “is the largest unrecognized threat to the quality and stability of children’s family lives.”^[1] Some 42% of American children will live in a cohabiting household, and “are markedly more likely to be physically, sexually and emotionally abused than children in both intact, married families and single parent families.” That is an alarming figure – about twice the 23% of kids who will live through a parental divorce.

However, the report did not suggest a remedy. I have two suggestions on how Louisiana might subsidize marriage, rather than cohabitation.

More than half of all unwed births are to cohabiting couples. Yet the government treats the unwed mother as if she were bringing up the child alone, and needed welfare, Medicaid, food stamps, EITC, housing and day care subsidies, etc. Typically, most have access to their partner’s salary as if they were married. However, if the couple marries, she loses almost all of those benefits. Gov. Bobby Jindal could announce in his State of the State Address: “Louisiana believes that every child deserves to have a married mother and father. However, more than half of this state’s births are to unmarried women. That is not in the best interest of children or their parents. However, most of the children born to unwed parents are not born to a single mother, but to cohabiting parents. Yet she gets state welfare, Medicaid and other subsidies on the presumption she is bringing up that child alone. That mother has the benefit of her partner’s income as if she were married. Yet if she marries the father, she loses most of these benefits. That’s why we are seeing fewer marriages and more cohabitation. In effect, the state is subsidizing people to live together, though that does benefit either parent and is harmful to their child. Therefore, I will ask the Legislature to pass two laws to encourage unwed parents to marry:

- “Louisiana will encourage cohabiting couples with a child to marry – which is what is best for them and their child. I am proposing legislation that would not cut welfare, Medicaid, day care and housing subsidies, etc. for any cohabiting couple who marries for two years. The only requirement is that the couple take classes on how to improve their communication and conflict resolution skills, to increase their odds of success. After that, we will taper off benefits for three years. Married men earn more than cohabiting men, and in time won’t need subsidies. ***Government should be subsidizing couples to marry, not to cohabit,***” the governor might say.

- “If a woman gives birth out-of-wedlock, she will be asked the name of the father, and whether they are cohabiting. If cohabiting, she would not receive welfare, Medicaid and other subsidies – unless the couple marries, in which case, they would get benefits for two years, tapering off after that. The only stipulation is that they must attend classes on how to improve their ability to resolve conflict, to increase the odds they will be successful,” he could conclude.

Save Billions of Taxpayer Funds

As I understand it, Louisiana is facing a \$2 billion state deficit in FY2012, mainly due to rising costs of Medicaid coupled with the expiration of federal economic stimulus financing. Of the state’s \$25 billion budget, welfare costs \$4 billion and health care, \$5.4 billion. Reductions of divorce and subsidies to cohabiting couples could save more than half of those figures – perhaps \$4 billion to \$5 billion a year in time. Marriage absence hurts state budgets as well as millions of families.

Recently, the Heritage Foundation estimated that each unwed birth and divorce (which involves one child, on average) cost taxpayers \$33,000 per year. With about 13 million single parent households, the cost to taxpayers is \$429 billion for welfare, Medicaid, food stamps, Earned Income Tax Credit, housing & day care subsidies.

Next Steps

I suggest that I show you two PowerPoint presentations, which I propose showing your full Commission:

- A 45 minute presentation on Community Marriage Policies
- A 25 minute presentation on legislative proposals to cut divorce and cohabitation rates

Conclusions

Although clergy marry 86% of couples, churches are not doing a very good job with more than half of Louisiana’s marriages ending in divorce. However, not one seminary in the country is teaching the five interventions which are proven to reduce divorce and cohabitation rates. They simply do not know what works. However, I have looked for solutions during the 30 years I have written my column, “Ethics & Religion.” Most of the best interventions were created by a single church. For example, my wife and I invented training Mentor Couples to administer a premarital inventory and teach communication skills. Of 288 couples our Marriage Mentors prepared for marriage in the 1990s, 58 decided **not** to marry. That’s a big 20%. However, of the 230 couples who did marry, we know of only 16 divorces over the past two decades. That’s a 7% failure rate or a 93% success rate – **virtual marriage insurance**. The course to reconcile separated couples, **Marriage 911**, was created in a Modesto church and **Stepfamily Support Groups** was created in a United Methodist Church near Atlanta. We have taken these ideas to more than 10,000 churches in 200+ cities, resulting in lower divorce and cohabitation rates.

However, part of the problem is that state laws currently undermine marriage by giving the person who files for divorce an advantage over the person trying to preserve the marriage. If both the **Parental Divorce Reduction Act** and **Responsible Spouse Guidelines** were passed by Louisiana's Legislature, I think you might see a reduction of 60% to 65% in the number of divorces each year. My first suggestion is that a clerk call up each parish and get actual divorce numbers for the past decade, and then track your progress year by year. Secondly, the Commission might encourage Governor Jindal to propose these reforms. Wouldn't it be wonderful if 10,000 to 12,000 fewer children experienced a parental divorce, instead of the 18,000 who do so annually?

Finally, the state currently subsidizes couples to live together, rather than to marry. What government subsidizes it will get more of. That's why cohabitation numbers rise every year and marriage rates drop. Therefore I have proposed that the Governor encourage cohabiting couples with children to marry by pledging not to reduce benefits such as Medicaid for two years after the wedding, and then taper off benefits over three years – and that a woman having an unwed birth not be given any benefits if she is cohabiting, unless the couple marries.

If houses of worship do a better job preparing couples for a lasting marriage or providing help to those in crisis, and if the state reduces incentives to divorce or cohabit, more marriages will endure, with a direct economic payoff to state budgets. The savings could be \$4 billion a year, double the projected deficit. Furthermore, the costs of these three proposals are negligible – a modest sum to spark Community Marriage Policies compared to the benefits. The legislative proposals to cut divorce would cost nothing to implement and would certainly reduce state budget costs as fewer couples divorce and go on the dole. While there would be a cost to subsidizing couples who marry, it would simply be replacing current subsidies to cohabiting couples, and in time, those subsidies would end, reducing state costs.

I have proposed both proven pastoral strategies and political strategies to strengthen marriage by reducing divorce and cohabitation. Louisiana could be the state to pioneer these answers for the nation. If you did so, your model would likely be picked up by other states, just as California's No Fault Divorce swept the country's legislatures. If these reforms were achieved nationally, taxpayers could save \$200 billion a year or \$2 trillion over a decade!

I would welcome an opportunity to present these ideas directly to the Louisiana Marriage Commission.

[1] W. Bradford Wilcox, *Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences*, Institute for American Values, August, 2011.

[2] In 2007, 50.9% of births were to unmarried parents.

[3] Paul James Birch, Stan E. Weed and Joseph Olsen, "Assessing the Impact of Community Marriage Policies on County Divorce Rates," *Family Relations*, 2004, 53 495-503. (Available on marriagesavers.org.)