

Wisconsin Family Action: State Assembly puts adult desires above interest of children

Posted on Friday, Jan 24, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, WI – This past Tuesday during its floor session, the Wisconsin State Assembly, under its Republican majority leadership, rammed through a bill that not only weakens the institution of marriage but puts children involved with a divorce at a much greater risk of confusion and trauma.

[Assembly Bill 439](#), authored by Republicans Representative Cindi Duchow (Pewaukee) and Senator Alberta Darling (River Hills), completely eliminates the waiting period for remarriage after a divorce is finalized. Currently the waiting period is six (6) months and has been that for decades. The vote on the bill was done by a voice vote, which is quickly called for and accomplished by the gaveling of the speaker *pro tem* who is in charge of the session. Using a voice vote means individual representatives do not have an opportunity to record an identifiable “yes” or “no” vote on the bill, which essentially means no one can be held individually responsible or accountable.

Julaine Appling, president of Wisconsin Family Action, responds to the vote.

“It was obvious from the moment this bill was introduced that Republican leadership was determined to pass it. In the public hearing I offered two very reasonable ideas for amendments: keep a waiting period of some sort for couples with minor children and rather than eliminate the waiting period entirely for everyone, reduce it to 3 months. The authors were not in any way interested in those ideas, nor was the committee chair.”

“Divorce, even in the best of circumstances, takes a toll on everyone involved. The

adults need a cooling-off period and children definitely need some processing time before one or both parents launch into a new marriage. The state has a vested interest in marriage primarily because the state cares, or should care, a great deal about the next generation. Research, anecdotal evidence and common sense all show children are tremendously impacted when their parents divorce. They are at risk of negative outcomes in basically every area of their lives. When a remarriage happens, it's another whole set of adjustments and realities children must deal with, like the total realization that their mom and dad are never going to get back together again, in addition to blended family challenges. Their world really is off kilter. A judicious waiting period helps protect children. The state Assembly just jettisoned that protection. Essentially, the Republican leadership forced a vote on its members that puts adult desires ahead of the well-being and best interest of children.

“Marriage as institution is weakened by this bill, as well. Statistics continue to show that second marriages are at a higher risk of divorce than are first marriages. Wisconsin already has the worst divorce laws in the country. With our “no-fault/no-contest” divorce laws, getting a divorce is as simple as telling a court you want one. Passing such a bill contributes to more second, third and beyond marriages that are more likely to dissolve than go the distance, thereby weakening the foundational institution of marriage. From an economic perspective, more divorces, means more taxpayer money spent on the high public costs associated with each divorce.

“I heard from a good number of legislators prior to the floor period that they were opposed to this bill, but unfortunately because of fear of repercussions, no one was willing to go to the mat on this bill and call for a roll-call vote. We can only hope the Senate will understand the truth about this bill and not force its members to vote against the best interests of children.”