

CUSTODY AMENDMENTS

2012 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Ryan D. Wilcox

Senate Sponsor: Aaron Osmond

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill adds an anti-discrimination clause to the custody statute.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

▶ adds to the divorce statute a statement that the court ~~§~~ ~~[may not discriminate against a parent based on age, race, ~~fi~~ color, national origin, ~~fi~~ religious preference, or gender]~~ shall consider the best interest of the child without preference for either the mother or

~~father~~ ~~←~~§ when

deciding custody.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

30-3-10, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2010, Chapter 237

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **30-3-10** is amended to read:

30-3-10. Custody of children in case of separation or divorce -- Custody consideration.

(1) If a husband and wife having minor children are separated, or their marriage is declared void or dissolved, the court shall make an order for the future care and custody of the

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28 minor children as it considers appropriate.

29 (a) In determining any form of custody, the court ~~§~~→ [may not discriminate against a parent
 30 due to gender, race, ~~fr~~→ color, national origin, ←~~fr~~ religious preference, or age, but] ←~~§~~ shall
 30a1 consider

30a the best interests of the child ~~§~~→ without preference for either the mother or father solely
 30b because of the biological sex of the parent [~~;~~ ~~or the parent's religious affiliation~~] ←~~§~~

31 and, among other factors the court finds relevant, the following:

32 (i) the past conduct and demonstrated moral standards of each of the parties;

33 (ii) which parent is most likely to act in the best interest of the child, including
 34 allowing the child frequent and continuing contact with the noncustodial parent;

35 (iii) the extent of bonding between the parent and child, meaning the depth, quality,
 36 and nature of the relationship between a parent and child; and

37 (iv) those factors outlined in Section 30-3-10.2.

38 (b) The court shall, in every case, consider joint custody but may award any form of
 39 custody which is determined to be in the best interest of the child.

40 (c) The children may not be required by either party to testify unless the trier of fact
 41 determines that extenuating circumstances exist that would necessitate the testimony of the
 42 children be heard and there is no other reasonable method to present their testimony.

43 (d) The court may inquire of the children and take into consideration the children's
 44 desires regarding future custody or parent-time schedules, but the expressed desires are not
 45 controlling and the court may determine the children's custody or parent-time otherwise. The
 46 desires of a child 16 years of age or older shall be given added weight, but is not the single
 47 controlling factor.

48 (e) If interviews with the children are conducted by the court pursuant to Subsection
 49 (1)(d), they shall be conducted by the judge in camera. The prior consent of the parties may be
 50 obtained but is not necessary if the court finds that an interview with the children is the only
 51 method to ascertain the child's desires regarding custody.

52 (2) In awarding custody, the court shall consider, among other factors the court finds
 53 relevant, which parent is most likely to act in the best interests of the child, including allowing
 54 the child frequent and continuing contact with the noncustodial parent as the court finds
 55 appropriate.

56 (3) If the court finds that one parent does not desire custody of the child, the court shall
 57 take that evidence into consideration in determining whether to award custody to the other
 58 parent.

59 (4) (a) Except as provided in Subsection (4)(b), a court may not discriminate against a
60 parent due to a disability, as defined in Section 57-21-2, in awarding custody or determining
61 whether a substantial change has occurred for the purpose of modifying an award of custody.

62 (b) If a court takes a parent's disability into account in awarding custody or determining
63 whether a substantial change has occurred for the purpose of modifying an award of custody,
64 the parent with a disability may rebut any evidence, presumption, or inference arising from the
65 disability by showing that:

66 (i) the disability does not significantly or substantially inhibit the parent's ability to
67 provide for the physical and emotional needs of the child at issue; or

68 (ii) the parent with a disability has sufficient human, monetary, or other resources
69 available to supplement the parent's ability to provide for the physical and emotional needs of
70 the child at issue.

71 (c) Nothing in this section may be construed to apply to adoption proceedings under
72 Title 78B, Chapter 6, Part 1, Utah Adoption Act.

73 (5) This section establishes neither a preference nor a presumption for or against joint
74 legal custody, joint physical custody or sole custody, but allows the court and the family the
75 widest discretion to choose a parenting plan that is in the best interest of the child.

Legislative Review Note
as of 1-20-12 2:13 PM

Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel