

CUSTODY AMENDMENTS

2012 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Ryan D. Wilcox

Senate Sponsor: Aaron Osmond

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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 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:

29 **30-3-10. Custody of children in case of separation or divorce -- Custody**
30 **consideration.**

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

34 (a) In determining any form of custody, the court shall consider the best interests of the
35 child without preference for either the mother or father solely because of the biological sex of
36 the parent and, among other factors the court finds relevant, the following:

- 37 (i) the past conduct and demonstrated moral standards of each of the parties;
- 38 (ii) which parent is most likely to act in the best interest of the child, including
39 allowing the child frequent and continuing contact with the noncustodial parent;
- 40 (iii) the extent of bonding between the parent and child, meaning the depth, quality,
41 and nature of the relationship between a parent and child; and
- 42 (iv) those factors outlined in Section 30-3-10.2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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