

Child Support Bill Is About Personal Responsibility and Accountability

By Richard Armstrong

Idaho's special legislative session to address child support is Monday. For all of us, it is critical that we uphold the values that make Idaho great. At the top of that list is personal responsibility.

Plain and simple, personal responsibility is what the Idaho Legislature will address next week — parents should be personally responsible and held accountable for the safety, well-being and health of their children.

This is not about state sovereignty, due process or the protection of personal information from foreign governments. If you examine the proposed bill, there are safeguards to protect our privacy and state authority.

There are no hidden agendas here. This is about Idaho standing firm to effectively work with other states and countries so children do not go hungry or rely on public assistance programs to meet their basic needs. Idaho and all other states were at the table crafting this uniform law. States have driven this legislation from the start. Why? Because parental responsibility is the foundation of healthy families, healthy communities and healthy states.

By adopting these uniform laws, all states use the same playbook in working together to collect child support. Irresponsible parents cannot flee to other states in hopes of avoiding their obligations. For the first time, the uniform laws will include child-support orders from approved foreign countries with which states want a working relationship. We don't have this today, and Idaho children suffer as a result.

I am the first one to wish we did not have to enforce child support in our state. But the reality is that enforcement is necessary. We only collect 16 percent of child support voluntarily. This legislation is the one tool that can hold parents accountable so children don't suffer. It prevents a parent from shifting their responsibility to the other parent. It prevents growth in public assistance programs. It prevents our state from becoming a haven for deadbeat parents.

There has been a lot of discussion about the financial impact to Idaho if we fail to accept the uniform laws being approved by all other states. We could lose up to \$46 million in child support administration and family support funds. But when it comes down to it, the possible loss of federal funding has little to do with protecting our values as Idahoans. If we stand alone and refuse to hold parents accountable for their children's well-being, we lose our integrity. If we lose that, we lose an irreplaceable part of Idaho.

Let's stand together as proud Idahoans on Monday. Let's make things right and show the world that parental responsibility is a family value we hold dear.

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