

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5866

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES,
MARCH 6, 1991

Brief Description: Ending parent obligation to stepchildren.

SPONSORS: Senators Owen, Rasmussen, Vognild, Roach, West, Bauer, Oke, Erwin and L. Smith.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chairman; L. Smith, Vice Chairman; Craswell, and Stratton.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Talmadge.

Staff: Joanne Conrad (786-7190)

Hearing Dates: March 6, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In 1990, state law was changed to allow stepparents to terminate the obligation to support stepchildren, upon motion to the court, as part of marital dissolution or legal separation proceedings. Historically, stepchildren have generally been entitled to a standard of support equal to that of the biological or adoptive children of the marriage. However, appropriate levels of support for all family members have become matters of controversy in recent years.

SUMMARY:

Court review of motions to terminate support of stepchildren in cases of marital dissolution or legal separation is eliminated. Stepchildren are excluded from statutory rights to community property support for their expenses and education, and the definition of "stepparent" is deleted from the community property rights and liabilities chapter of the Revised Code of Washington.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested on February 28, 1991

TESTIMONY FOR:

Some stepfathers have experienced inappropriate wage garnishment for support of stepchildren.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

Broad and significant fiscal impact, due to increased AFDC caseload.

TESTIFIED: Senator Owen (pro); Bernice Morehead, DSHS (con)