

NORTH CAROLINA FATHERLESS DAY 2016

So you won't forget, I'm Short Sheila from Charlotte. I'm also Old Sheila. But at 77, I plan on living to 100 if necessary to finally get shared parenting legislation passed. Too many kids are paying the price for custody battles that result in their losing a loving, meaningful relationship with one parent—usually their father. Fatherless children are our poor kids, our homeless kids, our dropout kids, our addicted kids, our violent kids, our pregnant kids, our abused kids, our suicidal kids. Want evidence? Read the vast abundance of current research.

Since 2007 our volunteer group, KN2P (KidsNeed2Parents), followed the advice of former Sen. Dan Clodfelter and organized statewide to modernize our custody law. He warned there would be “powerful organizations opposing any change in the current law.” Former Rep. Rick Glazier also warned “there are very powerful forces aligned the other way.” In state after state, we learned that it is bar associations that lobby HARD to keep the status quo. Why? Very big business. Watch “Divorce Corp” on Netflix to learn just how big.

So, what are we asking? That NC custody law be modernized to “presumed shared parenting.” That, if parents cannot agree and if there is no evidence of abuse or neglect, the presumption will be that the child spend equal time with both parents, or 50/50. Under the current vague “child’s best interest” standard, it is 0/0, encouraging parents to dis each other to win. With no jury in family court—and no attorney if a litigant cannot afford one—just one person, the judge, makes this critical decision. Too often there are relationships between judge and attorney, so we included an accountability section to our bill with case number, judge’s determination of time allocation, and REASON for that determination.

While I will not be in Washington, DC, for the June 15 National Fatherless Day rally (about 4,500 children lose a parent in U. S. family courts daily), I will speak in Raleigh and meet with legislators. I will do this in memory of my beloved dad Morris and in honor of our son who named his firstborn Maurice, both men my heroes. Though our son lost custody of his four children in a relocation case, he once did everything for them—from tube feeding the two sick ones to bathing and coaching them all. I still hear him reading them “Goodnight Moon.”

“North Carolina Belongs to Children,” says the caption under James Biggers’ huge mural in our Legislative Building. Really?