

Family Law Commission
Public Hearing Minutes
January 24, 2013
Senate Chamber

Members Present:

Lynn Kokjohn, Chair
Representative Ramone
Representative Bolden
Senator Ennis
Judge William Walls, Jr.
Curtis Bounds, Esquire
James Morning

Liaisons Present:

Dick Carter, Asst to the FLC
Bonnie Wood

The Family Law Commission held its annual public hearing on Thursday, January 24, 2013 to hear public concerns which would provide the topics of discussion for the rest of the year.

Call to Order:

The hearing was called to order at 7:07pm.

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Kokjohn opened the hearing by reading the purpose and mission of the commission and explaining the process of the hearing. She gave a brief review of the issues covered by the commission in 2012. She also discussed some of the programs put on by the commission in the past year. She recognized several ongoing issues such as open versus closed family court, and evening hours for the family court.

Speakers:

It was then time to hear testimonies and concerns from the members of the public who attended the hearing. Each person who wished to testify was given five minutes to speak in front of the commission members.

1. The speaker gave personal testimony to the issue that the only way to gain a continuance from the court is to file a motion, which is useless in the case of an accident or emergency, as it was in his case.
2. The next speaker voiced her opinion that divorce rates, not teachers, are to blame for children's problems in school.
3. The next speaker gave personal testimony to parental alienation as a form of abuse that harms both the parent and the child that no one should have to experience.
4. The next speaker gave testimony with the purpose of showing the court's bias toward women, and that as a male he felt he was guilty before he even arrived in the courtroom.
5. The next speaker suggested that the public testimonies given be recorded to ensure accuracy. They also gave testimony to urge the commission to hold members of the family court and the commission to a higher standard, and not allow abuse of power to occur.
6. The next speaker stood up to advocate for open family court proceedings.

7. The next speaker stood up to urge the commission to inflict harsher punishments for judges and attorneys who abuse their power. She also suggested that she took offense to the fact that some legislators assigned to the commission were not there, and urged anyone who could not attend the meetings regularly not to accept a position on the commission. She also suggested that the commission minutes that were published should reflect the presence of the public more clearly.
8. The next speaker suggested that he too felt he was not treated fairly in the courtroom due to the fact that he was a male. He also suggested that there be harsher punishment for those who lie under oath.
9. The next speaker suggested legislation to the Senators and Representatives present as he felt that a sexual crime accusation from when he was a minor has affected his ability to be a parent to his children today. He also voiced that he felt the Division of Family Services was a “broken system” and urged that it be fixed.
10. The final testimony was a letter read by a member of the public from a woman who could not be in attendance. The letter provided a testimony concerning domestic violence and suggested that perpetrators of domestic violence no longer be allowed to “slip through the cracks.”

Adjournment:

Ms. Kokjohn adjourned the hearing around 8:15pm.

Submitted by Stephanie James

Per Diem Staff