

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF MEN**  
MINUTES FOR THE EIGHTEENTH COMMISSION MEETING  
June 29, 2005 1-4 PM  
Legislative Office Building Room 206, Concord

**Members Present:** Joe Mastromarino, Scott Garman, Michael Geanoulis, Stephen Gorin, Marshall Hickok.

**Members Absent:** Larry Colby, Gus Lerandau.

Others Present: Rep. David Bickford, Lee Newman.

These minutes were taken by Scott Garman.

Note: The May meeting was canceled at the last minute due to room scheduling problems.

**Secretary's Report:**

The minutes from the April meeting, taken by Scott Garman, were sent to the Commissioners before the meeting by e-mail. Mike Geanoulis moved to approve the minutes without changes, Steve Gorin seconded, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

**Treasurer's Report:**

Larry Colby, Treasurer, was not present at this meeting and his report was deferred until the next meeting.

**Web Site:**

Scott Garman reported that other than meeting minutes additions, the Commission's web site has not changed since the last meeting.

Mike Geanoulis requested that the list of agenda items covered at each meeting be made available on the Commission's web site so that the public can see at a glance what topics the Commission is addressing. Scott Garman agreed to create a new web page for this, separate from the current meeting minutes page.

**Commissioner Contributions:**

At the last meeting, discussions about the purpose of the Commission resulted in the agreement that each Commissioner would come to this meeting with a list of items related to the mission of

the Commission that they wish to work on.

Mike Geanoulis noted that the legislative mandate of the Commission includes both studying issues as well as promoting initiatives related to its mission. He quoted directly from RSA 19-I:

***19-I:4 Duties.*** – *The duties of the commission shall include, but not be limited to:*

*I. Examining issues and effects of cultural biases and stereotyping beginning with childhood experiences and progress in public schools, and extending to include a study of male suicide and adult concerns such as family relations, promoting education, and policies which bring fathers and children closer together.*

*II. Studying health problems unique to men or which predominantly affect men, and making appropriate recommendations.*

*III. Promoting initiatives and programs that will enable men to develop career skills and continue their education so that they become productive and responsible citizens.*

This RSA is linked to directly on the front page of the Commission's web site, [www.nh.gov/csm](http://www.nh.gov/csm).

The Commissioners listed their goals as follows:

Mike Geanoulis: Document the disadvantages that accrue to fatherless children and advocate for greater positive father involvement. Promote public awareness of the large body of literature that demonstrates the benefits of involved fathers. Recently, Mike got in touch with Thom Linehan, an Associate at the Family Research Center of the UNH Cooperative Extension program. Mr. Linehan is well-versed in research about fathers and may offer some insight to the Commission. Mike intends to invite him to a future meeting.

Marshall Hickok: Education gender disparities are of primary concern, and in particular trying to infer the meaning of various education indicators to understand the status of men. Specifically mentioned were college enrollment rates, graduation rates, SAT scores, and the presence of male role models in education, particularly during early childhood education. Marshall brought up a recent segment on National Public Radio's Morning Edition program (May 17, 2005) which discussed the gender gap in higher education. Tom Mortenson, a Higher Education Policy Analyst and Senior Scholar for the Pell Institute, was interviewed during the program and Marshall has gotten in touch with him by e-mail to obtain more information.

Joe Mastromarino: Focus on men's health issues, and in particular a study of male suicide in NH which has been ongoing. Joe has been having some difficulty finding statistician resources to help interpret the data from this study and hopes to make more progress in this area. He also has an interest in men's mental health issues, particularly the differences between the ways men and women manage emotional crises and self-care.

Scott Garman: Offered to help in any area of study that could use more assistance. Started collecting education statistics because it was perceived that this issue wasn't getting enough attention until recently. Scott has volunteered to help write any section of the biennial report and

in particular the section on education.

Steve Gorin: Was initially interested in health issues, particularly public health policy issues. Education is also viewed as important. As of late, Steve has been interested in the economic status of men and how it might related to the educational disparities. Another issue he pointed out that hasn't been addressed yet is the issue of aging among men. There is a good-sized body of literature about women and aging but not much is heard about men and aging. Specifically, Steve has chosen to focus on researching the educational status of men as well as the economic status of men.

Rep. David Bickford interjected some noteworthy information about the status of young men. He noted that young men do more poorly in high school than young women and that this decreases men's acceptance rates to college. Also, at a Child and Family Law Committee meeting about a year ago, John Williams from the Office of Child Support explained that when teenage pregnancies occur, there are state-sponsored programs to help the custodial parent enroll and succeed in college (such as free day care and scholarships), but nothing similar for non-custodial parents (most commonly men). In fact, these young men are typically forced (both legally and through social pressures) into full-time work immediately after high school in order to pay child support and thus cannot attend college.

#### **Meeting with Attorney General's Office:**

Marshall Hickok noted that he has not gotten in touch with the Attorney General's office since the last meeting in order to ask some questions about the way meetings should be conducted and address miscellaneous concerns. He agreed to do so by the next meeting.

#### **Legislation:**

Rep. David Bickford gave an overview of legislation the Commission may be interested in:

HB640 has passed the House and Senate and will shortly be awaiting the Governor's signature. This bill replaces the term "custody" with the phrase "parental rights and responsibility," requires parents to file parenting plans to divide parental rights and responsibilities, and provides criteria for determining the best interest of a child. It is expected to become effective October 1.

HB450 has also passed the House and Senate and will renew the Child Support Study Commission, as well as hire an economist to study the costs of raising a child in New Hampshire. This study is required by federal regulations in order to meet federal funding requirements.

HB529, which establishes a rebuttable presumption of shared parenting, has been retained for further study and work sessions will be held on it late this summer.

No major legislative changes are expected for the rest of the summer.

### **Children's Alliance:**

Mike Geanoulis gave a status update about his attempts to inform the NH Children's Alliance (NH CAN) about the relationship between father involvement and wellness levels of children. NH CAN is a statewide, nonprofit agency whose mission is to advocate for the needs of children and promote child wellness levels.

Mike expressed concerns that NH CAN has been inconsistent in accepting articles he has submitted for their "Reading Room" web site section about the importance of father involvement in children's lives. One recent article on postnatal depression in fathers and its impact on children was rejected for the reason that the study had no direct web link. He also had another study rejected which linked fatherlessness with criminal behavior for the reason that it was "too old", even though the report was issued in 2004. Mike has made an e-mail request for the current guidelines NH CAN uses for deciding which articles to include in its Reading Room.

Mike is primarily concerned that NH CAN is not sufficiently aware of the importance of fathers. Steve Gorin expressed doubt that NH CAN has any negative biases against fathers and offered to help contact some people in NH CAN to help resolve any possible misunderstandings.

Joe asked Mike to give an update on the status of this at the next meeting.

### **Violence Against Women Act:**

Mike Geanoulis reported that he has received letters from many people about an effort to make the federal Violence Against Women Act gender-inclusive. This act is up for renewal this year and many domestic violence services which serve primarily men have been in practice forbidden from receiving VAWA funds. Given that this bill's appropriations has amounted to billions of taxpayer dollars, it seems only reasonable that these funds be distributed based on need, not on gender.

Mike then put forward the following motion for a resolution that the Commission could approve:

*The Commission on the Status of Men believes that the Violence Against Women Act should reflect equity and provide funding for services to both female and male victims, pursuant to the equal protection clause of the Constitution.*

Scott Garman seconded the motion.

Steve Gorin raised some objections to this wording because he felt that the equal protection clause of the Constitution may not apply here. He feels there should be equity in funding for domestic violence protection, and funding for services that help men. However, he does not believe that this equity of funding needs to apply to VAWA.

Lee Newman, Executive Director of the Stop Abuse for Everyone, NH chapter, noted that service providers who serve male victims have applied for VAWA funding and been rejected. These groups have been specifically told that VAWA's intention is not to fund services for male domestic violence victims. This has gone on despite the fact that Senator Joseph Biden has stated that this was not his intention. This is all the more reason to make sure gender-neutrality is specifically mentioned in the law now that it is up for renewal.

Mike then retracted his first motion and made a second motion for a resolution that the Commission could approve:

*The Commission on the Status of Men supports the renewal of the Violence Against Women Act only if it is made gender-neutral in language, intent, and application.*

Scott Garman seconded the motion.

Marshall Hickok felt that making resolutions such as this one are not in-line with what the Commission was intended to do by the legislature. He then suggested that a good project for the Commission instead would be to research NH state statutes to identify which ones use gender-specific language. Marshall questioned whether this resolution would really have an impact on VAWA because it is a federal law.

A vote was then taken. Scott Garman and Mike Geanoulis voted in favor of the resolution, and Steve Gorin and Marshall Hickok voted against it. Joe Mastromarino broke the tie by voting in favor of it. The resolution passed 3-2.

Joe agreed to prepare and distribute a press release announcing this resolution.

### **NH Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Mike Geanoulis has received requests from members of the public to invite the NH Coalition Against Domestic Violence to a Commission meeting for the purpose of discussing shared parenting. It was not immediately clear who within the Coalition should be invited and it was decided that this invitation would be postponed until the members of the public who proposed it would give more clarity about the goals that would be achieved by this meeting.

### **Second Men's Equality Conference:**

Scott Garman announced that the Second National Men's Equality Congress will meet on July 15-16, 2005 in Washington, D.C. at the Washington Court Hotel. The Congress will consist of two days of activism and meetings in an effort to draw attention to issues of urgent importance to men as citizens, fathers, and human beings. Scott will be giving a presentation at the conference titled "Internet Tools for Promoting Collaboration and Activism." For more details see [www.trueequality.com/index2.php](http://www.trueequality.com/index2.php).

**Biennial Report:**

The first biennial report of the Commission is due this November. It was agreed that Commissioners should begin to outline or draft sections of this report based on data they have collected to be presented at the next meeting.

Joe Mastromarino adjourned the meeting at 4:10 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for July 27, 2005 from 1-4 PM. It will be held in Room 206 of the Legislative Office Building in Concord, NH. Members of the public are encouraged to attend.