



Hundredth Legislature - First Session - 2007  
**Introducer's Statement of Intent**  
**LB 554**

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**Chairperson:** Brad Ashford  
**Committee:** Judiciary  
**Date of Hearing:** March 8, 2007

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB 554 proposes to rewrite the Parenting Act and to require mediation in contested child custody cases after July 1, 2009. Among other things, the Parenting Act re-write:

- (1) Retains the “best interests of the child” standard as the standard by which child custody and parenting time issues will be resolved;
- (2) Recognizes the importance of maintaining parent-child relationships while at the same time protecting victims of abuse and neglect;
- (3) Codifies, with some modification, the court-recognized distinction between joint physical and joint legal custody;
- (4) Requires Parenting Plans to include considerable detail as to what will happen in the life of children after a divorce; and
- (5) Requires parents involved in custody and/or parenting time cases to attend a parenting education course.

LB 554 directs parents to develop a Parenting Plan either on their own or through mediation. If the parents are unable to do so in a particular case, the court would create a Parenting Plan that is in the best interests of the child and that meets the requirements of the Parenting Act.

After July 1, 2009, parents involved in custody and/or parenting time cases would be required to attend at least one session with a mediator. Cases involving allegations of domestic intimate partner abuse (a defined term) or unresolved parental conflict (also defined) would be referred to a specialized alternative dispute resolution process with mediators trained to deal with high-conflict cases.

LB 554 also includes language that (1) raises the filing fees for divorce and modification actions; (2) amends § 42-371, which pertains to the release or subordination of a lien for a

support order; (3) amends § 43-1407, which pertains to a father's responsibility for the costs associated with the birth of his child and with the mother's pregnancy; and (4) repeals § 42-364.01 through § 42.364.12.

**Principal Introducer:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Senator Mike Flood**