

ONE HUNDRED FIRST LEGISLATURE

FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 225

Introduced by Christensen, 44.

PURPOSE: With divorce rates remaining high throughout the United States, many states have enacted laws to reduce divorce and mitigate its effects. Many government leaders have recognized the large and increasing cost divorce has had on not only the immediate couple and their families, but also communities and states as a whole. Many state governments are interested in identifying what part the states' policies, incentives, and initiatives can play in reversing the high rates of divorce.

Though many states have taken some action in this area, approximately ten years ago, Oklahoma took major steps to address divorce and its negative effects through a comprehensive effort called the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. This initiative has provided thousands of couples with, and directed many to, a variety of marriage education courses and resources. During the initiative, evidence showed that while the national divorce rate was increasing, Oklahoma's divorce rate was decreasing.

Results from an economic study of the State of Oklahoma showing the negative effects of divorce on the state's economy helped spark this initiative. The Governor of Oklahoma, realizing his state's economy had been negatively affected by divorce, and realizing his state had one of the highest rates of divorce in

the nation at the time, pushed for the development of a plan to help reduce divorce in Oklahoma through policy changes, marriage education courses, and other resources.

This study will seek to understand the process Oklahoma went through to study the problem of divorce and implement the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative so that Nebraska may explore and learn from Oklahoma's actions and formulate possible changes in policy, which could potentially launch Nebraska's own marriage initiative. In addition, this study will seek to learn from other states and organizations that have taken actions to strengthen marriage and reduce divorce through policy change and marriage education. This study shall include, but not be limited to (1) examining steps Oklahoma used to understand divorce and its affect on the state's economy and public services, (2) examining Oklahoma's implementation of new policies and education under the marriage initiative, (3) examining the effectiveness of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative in strengthening marriages and reducing divorce, (4) applying Oklahoma's successes with successes from other states to develop potential recommendations for policy changes and education, or a potential plan for a Nebraska Marriage Initiative, and (5) exploring the need for marriage education in Nebraska and how state government may appropriately partner with public and private organizations to reduce divorce in Nebraska.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:

1. That the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.