

**PRAIRIE POLITICS**    DECEMBER 3, 2015 2:29 PM

# Kansas senator criticizes media coverage of foster care and gay rights

## HIGHLIGHTS

Sen. Forrest Knox says there's no "right" to be foster care parents

Equality Kansas says Knox should stop politicizing issue of gay parents

Knox wants DCF to track family structure and study outcomes





◀ 1 of 2 ▶



BY BRYAN LOWRY

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A south-central Kansas lawmaker sent an e-mail to constituents Wednesday criticizing media coverage of the state's foster care system and the rights of same-sex couples.

Sen. Forrest Knox, R-Altoona, chairs a special committee on foster care that reviewed research about the fitness of same-sex parents last month. The research, from Catholic priest and sociologist Donald Paul Sullins, has been disputed by the American Psychological Association and other scientific organizations. The testimony was widely reported and drew some criticism.

“The media’s issue of the day, homosexual rights, seems to trump all,” Knox said in his e-mail to constituents. “Though most of the research dealing with how best to meet the needs of children is not at all aimed at the homosexual marriage issue, anything that seems to cast their choices in a bad light is considered controversial.”

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**THERE IS NO ‘RIGHT’ OF CERTAIN PEOPLE OR CLASSES OF PEOPLE TO BE LICENSED FOSTER PARENTS.**

Sen. Forrest Knox, R-Altoona

“Not long ago it was not at all controversial that the traditional, ‘nuclear’ family – comprised of a father and a mother in a lifelong, loving marriage – raising children – was considered to be the best way to meet the needs of children,” Knox continued. “Today this view is no longer politically correct and is actually received by many with anger...My concern is the children. If the state has custody of children, should we not do the best we can at meeting their needs? There is no ‘right’ of certain people or classes of people to be licensed foster parents.”

The bulk of research does not support the claim that gay parents are less equipped to raise children, according to Jennifer Pearson, a sociologist at Wichita State University. A survey by Columbia Law School found that 73 of 77 studies on the matter show that the children of gay parents fare no worse than their peers raised by heterosexual parents.

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**HE NEEDS TO STOP POLITICIZING GAY AND LESBIAN FAMILIES AND FOCUS ON WHAT’S BEST FOR ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, NOT JUST THOSE THAT LIVE IN THE FEVERED IMAGININGS OF HIS FRINGE IDEOLOGY.**

Tom Witt, Equality Kansas

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Tom Witt, executive director of the gay rights group Equality Kansas, said Knox “ignores reality and continues to cite thoroughly discredited reports to justify tearing children from safe, loving households and placing them in dangerous and abusive environments, such as the Schumm family in Topeka.”

“He needs to stop politicizing gay and lesbian families and focus on what’s best for all children and families, not just those that live in the fevered imaginings of his fringe ideology,” Witt said.

Witt referred to Topeka City Council member Jonathan Schumm and his wife, Allison, adoptive and foster parents who face charges of aggravated battery, abuse of a child and child endangerment. Last year, a judge removed a child from lesbian foster parents in Wichita, who were trying to adopt, and placed the child with the Schumms, who had adopted the child’s half-siblings. The move was based on a recommendation from the Kansas Department for Children and Families.

DCF won’t comment specifically on the case, but has repeatedly said it does not discriminate against gays and lesbians.

Reach by phone, Knox said that he tried to present both points of view at the hearing, noting that a representative from the American Psychological Association testified in opposition to Sullins.

“The liberal side just totally discounts the conservative side and kind of attacks their character instead of just talking about the facts. And that’s what I’m trying to do. That’s why I brought out both sides...because what I want to do is address the facts,” Knox said. “And personally I believe the facts show that the traditional nuclear family best meets the needs of kids.”

Knox said he wants DCF to begin tracking family structure and other information so that the agency can study what type of home best meets the needs of kids. He introduced a bill last year that would have qualified heterosexual married couples for higher compensation as foster parents if they met a list of requirements, including no alcohol or tobacco in the home.

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**THE LIBERAL SIDE JUST TOTALLY DISCOUNTS THE CONSERVATIVE SIDE AND KIND OF ATTACKS THEIR CHARACTER INSTEAD OF JUST TALKING ABOUT THE FACTS.**

Sen. Forrest Knox, R-Altoona

Knox is not the only lawmaker to contend that heterosexual couples are the best option as foster parents. Sen. Mary Pilcher-Cook, R-Shawnee, the chair of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee, said in an e-mail that enough research has gone into the subject.

“It fits with common sense, as we should be able to acknowledge that mothers and fathers interact with children in distinctly different and complementary ways,” Pilcher-Cook said. “Each sex is different in nature and necessary for the optimal development of a child.”

Rep. Jim Ward, D-Wichita, is seeking an audit to determine whether the state is discriminating against same-sex couples. He said the rhetoric from his colleagues in the Legislature won’t help efforts to bring accountability to the system.

“The things that Forrest Knox is saying are ridiculous,” Ward said. “All of that’s been rejected.”

“My argument to Forrest and Mary is they’re still trying to argue the world is flat and the rest of us have moved on,” Ward said.

*Bryan Lowry: 785-296-3006, @BryanLowry3*

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**Mark Cards**

Good for Senator Knox. Many questions concerning gay rights include much nonsense that "science" states as "facts" as long as they conform to politically correct notions. This completely ignores the fact that these questions are not scientific but moral.

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**John Liebenthal** · Wichita, Kansas

...and morally it is a good thing for children to have people, regardless of sexual orientation, who love them and take care of them instead of letting them stay in facilities without as much love.

Like · Reply · 9 · Dec 3, 2015 2:22pm · Edited

**John Liebenthal** · Wichita, Kansas

Also, "science" and "facts" are what make your car run, cook your food, everything. Try powering your car on "morals." "Morals" are why a guy shot 12 people last week. I'll take science and facts any day.

Like · Reply · 11 · Dec 3, 2015 2:24pm

**Daniel Seib** · St. Patrick's Syracuse, NY

Who the hell are you to decide moral issues for everybody? I'm absolutely positive there are things you do that many would consider immoral. You expect LBGT to not only accept being treated as second-class citizens even though we pay taxes just like you AND sit back and allow ourselves to be discriminated against? Get lost!

Like · Reply · 7 · Dec 3, 2015 8:11pm

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**Elaine Sunde** · Saranac Lake, New York

"There is no 'right' of certain people or classes of people to be licensed foster parents."

So the notion that heterosexual couples are preferred as foster parents has just been negated by Sen. Knox. Good for him.

Like · Reply · 10 · Dec 3, 2015 1:46pm

**David Matson**

You apparently don't understand that there is a "right" not to be discriminated against. Where do people like you come from?

Like · Reply · 2 · Dec 5, 2015 2:52pm

**Joseph Mohr** · Wichita, Kansas



The "traditional nuclear family" is best exemplified by the Muslims. Divorce, promiscuity, abuse, and addiction seem to reek havoc within Christian families.

Muslim families should be the first choice for a stable, morally upright, and traditional family setting.

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**Ben Huie** · Wichita State University

Maybe Josh Duggar can be an example.

Like · Reply · 6 · Dec 3, 2015 2:01pm



**John Liebenthal** · Wichita, Kansas

Ben Huie Josh Duggar is is obviously just a victim of the Liberal Media bias.

Like · Reply · 5 · Dec 3, 2015 2:25pm



**Adam Smith**

John Liebenthal - I get your sarcasm!

Like · Reply · 1 · Dec 3, 2015 7:50pm

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**Mike Dwyer** · Washington University in St. Louis

I think the common sense argument makes sense only insofar as you consider parenthood simply as a means of top-down transmission of cultural knowledge and traditional structures. In a tertiary way, it has validity. But I think a better way of transmission would be to analyze the individual personalities. You need to have the widest range possible, aggressive and passive and flexible and inflexible. How a marriage is stable is more important than its stability. But that is less important than the range of other children in the family, because we learn more from brothers and sisters than parent... [See More](#)

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**MJ Vandecreek** · Works at Independent Consultant

Senator Knox, using one study that supports your views; while also ignoring the analysis that this particular study has serious flaws; and then not doing enough research to realize that "A survey by Columbia Law School found that 73 of 77 studies on the matter show that the children of gay parents fare no worse than their peers raised by heterosexual parents." Respectfully, Senator Knox, this is not "attacking your character", it is questioning your ability to be a well-informed Senator by considering all of the evidence and studies. I do agree that DCF should be collecting more data on family structure.

Like · Reply ·  5 · Dec 3, 2015 11:52pm · Edited



**MJ Vandecreek** · Works at Independent Consultant

addendum: Feb 2015: <http://thinkprogress.org/.../regnerus-sullins-same-sex.../>

Like · Reply ·  2 · Dec 3, 2015 3:09pm



**Leslie Gray**

Thank you.

Like · Reply ·  1 · Dec 4, 2015 3:56pm



**Adam Smith**

more BS hateful rhetoric, based on a distorted reality. Note to Knox - simply change the channel. I can't recall one person who doesn't think that a mom and dad and two kids is a classic family set up. Only "martyrs" like Knox will view the diversity of same sex couples as an assault to their own fundamental way of life. It's a statement to how fragile their own faith is to be so challenged by something non mainstream.

Like · Reply ·  4 · Dec 3, 2015 7:49pm



**John Alexander Williams** · University of Michigan

"And personally I believe the facts show..." That's the problem. His ideology seems to be distorting his view of the facts.

Like · Reply ·  5 · Dec 4, 2015 5:06am



**Michael Gemmell**

Sad to say, Knox's inability to accept the facts are a symptom of the mental disorder, homophobia. Psychologists identified homophobia as a mental illness and published their results in the Journal of the National Institutes of Health in 1953. Homophobia is the irrational fear, disgust, or hatred of gays, lesbians, and/or bisexual people, or of homosexual feelings in oneself. It refers to the discomfort one feels with any behavior, belief, or attitude (in self or others) that does not conform to traditional sex role stereotypes. Homophobia exhibits itself in the fear of knowing, befriending,... [See More](#)

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**Leslie Gray**

Senator Knox needs to do some basic 'research' and be unattended that the 'research' that he's representing is not from an credible source. Merely grabbing a study from any old religious source does not mean that the source is even remotely usable due to in this case ethics violation issues.

Like · Reply ·  2 · Dec 4, 2015 4:03pm



**Michael Gemmell**

You're correct. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute has on its website details of studies of same gender parents and our children

going back over 30 years. They recommend same gender couples be utilized MORE in adoptions because they proved same gender parents are just as good at raising children as mixed-sex parents. Look it up for yourselves and learn the FACTS about same gender parents. A 2008 report from The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, America's most respected experts on adoption said:

"[S]tudies on children dating back 25 years conclude that children raised by gay and lesbian non-adoptive parents fare as well as those reared by heterosexual parents (Breways, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Chan, Raboy & Patterson, 1998; Golombok, Perry, Burston, Murray, Mooney-Sommer, Stevens, & Golding, 2003; Wainwright, Russell & Patterson, 2004)."

<http://adoptioninstitute.org/winter-2015-newsletter>

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**Carole Mellin** · New York University

Kansas, with the failed Teaparty economy bringing it to its knees, is already pretty much a laughingstock to the nation (along with Texas and Indiana). This kind of attitude must reflect your poor educational sytem...or something in the corn? Monsanto, is that you?

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