

Advocates: Marriage Good for Children and Taxpayers

- ✖ Traditional marriage is not only good for children, it's good for taxpayers.

So say traditional marriage advocates who are participating in a weeklong initiative aimed at promoting marriage. The leaders of National Marriage Week, which began Sunday and runs through Feb. 14, say building a "marriage culture" helps curtail poverty and the fatherlessness that influences high incarceration rates.

"The alarming drop in marriage rates in America combined with high divorce rates are costly to the nation-financially costly to taxpayers and individuals, and emotionally costly to children," said Chuck Stetson, chairman of National Marriage Week USA. "The nation needs to pay attention."

The group points to research that shows single mothers have lower household incomes than married couples, children from two-parent homes have higher graduation rates and that a majority of juvenile and adult inmates come from fatherless homes.

"Marriage works," said Sheila Weber, executive director of National Marriage Week. "Research shows that marriage makes people happier, live longer, and build more economic security."

National Marriage Week leaders point to a 2008 study by the Institute for American Values that found divorce and unwed childbearing costs U.S. taxpayers \$112 billion a year because of increased federal expenditures on antipoverty, criminal justice and education programs.

“There is a definite economic impact when we allow marriages to fail and unwed parenthood to grow, and taxpayers see that in the budget when they see the expenditures for Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice,” said New Hampshire gubernatorial candidate Karen Testerman, who participated in a press conference Monday morning to kick off National Marriage Week activities in her state.

“I think it’s really important that we look at not bandaging all of the fallout from fractured families, but we start looking at what’s causing the bleeding in the first place and start to address that,” she added.

Governors in Georgia and Utah have recognized the week.

In addition to raising awareness of the benefits of marriage, campaign leaders seek to mobilize churches to support marriage through activities such as youth dating seminars, marriage preparation classes for singles and weekend marriage conferences for couples.

Organizers also are spearheading a petition drive to protect the Defense of Marriage Act, which prohibits federal recognition of gay marriage.

The campaign culminates Sunday with special marriage week services being held in churches nationwide.

Originally hosted by a group known as Smart Marriages, the marriage week is being sponsored this year by the Let's Strengthen Marriage campaign, which recently held a webinar aimed at challenging church leaders to lead a "marriage revival" in the U.S.

The week, which has been marked in Europe for several years, has been endorsed by the Family Research Council; Prison Fellowship founder Charles Colson; Bishop Harry Jackson, chairman of the Stand4Marriage DC Coalition; and the Rev. Sammy Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.