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ALEC's Legislative Agenda on Women and Children

On American Legislative Exchange Council task forces, corporate lobbyists and special interests vote as equals with elected representatives on templates to change our laws, behind closed doors with no press or public allowed to see the votes or deliberations. ALEC's model legislation harms women and families in numerous ways, including proposals that would roll back no fault divorce laws, limit the regulation of day care centers, make it more difficult for impoverished children to receive the benefits of welfare, limit regulation of toxic and hazardous substances that adversely affect children's health even more so than adults, bar lawsuits for injuries due to recalled drugs despite the spate of recalls of medicine used by children and young adults, and, among other things, outsource to for-profit companies the collection of child support.

Regulating Marriage and Child Care

- ALEC's "[Marriage Contract Act](#)" would roll back the clock by decades to the era when a wife or husband had to prove fault, such as adultery or impotence, in order to dissolve a marriage contract. The bill rejects the concept of "no-fault" divorce, which allows incompatible spouses to dissolve a marriage without claiming the failure was the other's fault. The bill also specifies that a marriage contract is only between a man and a woman.
- ALEC's "[Neighborhood Child Care Center Act](#)" exempts entities responsible for providing day care for infants and children from complying with any state regulations other than those regarding fire/safety and health/sanitation if the day care center receives no state or federal funds; such provisions may put more kids at risk of injury from untrained or poorly trained day care workers or from other conditions that would otherwise have been regulated.

Limiting Access to Family Benefits and Relief Programs

- ALEC's "[Proof of Custody Act](#)" requires that a parent have sole custody to obtain benefits to help care for a child, unless both parents with joint custody apply for benefits for the child. The bill echoes demands of an anti-welfare men's group, which claimed the bill would prevent welfare fraud. It denies access to welfare benefits to children when parents have joint custody rights unless both parents apply for benefits and are jointly eligible, without any exceptions for joint custody situations where a parent is not providing required child support, is uncooperative, or not themselves eligible for welfare benefits.
- ALEC's "[Privatization of Child Support Enforcement Services](#)" allows a state to privatize the administration, delivery, and/or management of child support enforcement services, injecting a profit motive into the management of child support with no compelling proof that outsourcing such services to a monopoly business with no competition will improve child support collection.
- ALEC's "[Study of Welfare Benefits of Families in the AFDC Program Act](#)" mandates a study to calculate the total value of benefits provided to poor families, which are often single parent households. Included in the study would be programs such as low-income energy assistance to prevent families from freezing to death, school breakfast and lunch programs that help ensure that children in poverty have nutrition essential to help them concentrate and learn in school, Head Start programs that help prepare low income children for school,

and “Women, Infants, and Children” (WIC) benefits that help ensure that babies born in poverty have access to nutrition. The likely aim of the study is to make it easier for opponents of these programs to argue for their elimination.

Endangering Children’s Health

- ALEC legislation such as the [Voluntary Childhood Lead Exposure Control Act](#), the [Private Property Protection Act](#), the [Groundwater Protection Act](#), and the [Resolution to Retain State Authority over Coal Ash as Non-Hazardous Waste Act](#) impose disproportionate burdens on children and pregnant women who are particularly vulnerable to environmental toxins. When these bills are enacted, the [resulting increases](#) in pollution exposure and ingestion can lead to premature births, birth defects, childhood asthma, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and countless other health problems.

Imposing in Women’s Health

- ALEC’s “[Parental Consent For Abortion Act](#)” requires written parental consent for a young woman under 18 to exercise her right preserve her privacy, control her destiny, and terminate a pregnancy. If a young woman does not seek or is denied parental consent, she would have to navigate the judicial system to petition a court to waive the requirement. The bill also makes it a crime for a doctor to perform an abortion at the young woman’s request, without parental consent or a judicial override.
- ALEC’s “[Guide to Repeal Obamacare](#),” which would repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and numerous other ALEC “model” bills on Medicaid (i.e. “[Resolution on Federal Medicaid and Welfare Block Grants](#)”) would adversely affect women, including:
 - Insurance companies will be free to charge women more than men and deny coverage to children and adults with preexisting conditions. The ACA would stop this.
 - Pregnant women in some states would no longer receive full Medicaid benefits because some ALEC [provisions](#) would not allow states to provide more benefits than the federal government minimally provides. Enacting such bills may leave pregnant women without access to important medical attention during pregnancy.
- ALEC’s “[Drug Liability Act](#)” and “[Punitive Damages Standards Act](#)” adversely impact women and children. The Drug Liability Act bars American families from suing a drug company if medicine kills or injures their child, spouse, or parent if the FDA approved the drug—even though numerous dangerous drugs have been approved by the FDA only to be recalled and many drugs are not adequately tested on sub-populations such as children or women of different ages. Similarly, the limits on punitive damages act would limit the power of a jury to punish a corporation whose actions or neglect were egregious, and by limiting punitive damages to a multiple of compensatory damages would undervalue to lives of children and women, who may have little or no projected lost income to compensate but whose loss is enormously devastating.

Creating a “Commission on Men”

- ALEC’s “[Act relating to the creation and operation of the Commission on Men](#)” would create a new taxpayer-funded entity to promote “paternal influence” and male family involvement, as well as examine some men’s health issues. The bill was sought by men’s rights groups as a way to promote their political and ideological agenda.

Pushing Laws That Favor Corporations and the Wealthiest over Working Families

- ALEC promotes austere economic measures that disadvantage working families while favoring rich corporations and individuals: bills include the [Capital Gains Tax Elimination Act](#), [Resolution Urging Congress to Permanently Extend the Bush Tax Cuts](#), and [A memorial to the Congress of the United States, urging Congress to cut the federal corporate tax rate](#). These and other bills make it harder to raise revenue to provide needed public services for families.