How To Celebrate Father's Day
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On this Father's Day, Americans should ponder the appalling fact that an estimated 40 percent of our nation's children are living in homes without their own father. Most of our social problems are caused by kids who grow up in homes without their own fathers: drug abuse, illicit sexual activity, unwed pregnancies, youth suicide, high school dropouts, runaways, and crime.

Where have all the fathers gone? Some men are irresponsible slobs, but no evidence exists that nearly half of American children were voluntarily abandoned by their own fathers; there must be other explanations.

For 30 years, feminist organizations and writers have propagated the myth that women are victims of an oppressive patriarchal society and that marriage is an inherently abusive institution that makes wives second-class citizens. Feminists made divorce a major component of women's liberation and their political freedom.

For three decades, feminists have toyed with the question that Maureen Dowd chose as the title of her forthcoming book, Are Men Necessary? That's just the latest version of Gloria Steinem's famous line, "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle."

College textbooks portray marriage as especially bleak and dreary for women. Assigned readings are preoccupied with domestic violence, battering, abuse, marital rape, and divorce.

During the Clinton Administration, the feminists parlayed their hysteria that domestic violence is a national epidemic into the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This created a gigantic gravy train of taxpayers' money, known as feminist pork, that empowers pro-divorce, anti-male activism.

Not satisfied with several billions from the U.S. Treasury, 67 feminist and liberal organizations supported a lawsuit to try to get private allegations of domestic abuse heard in federal courts so they could collect civil damages against men and institutions with deep pockets. Fortunately, the Supreme Court, in Brzonkala v. Morrison (2000), declared unconstitutional VAWA's section that might have permitted that additional mischief.

However, VAWA's billions of dollars continue to finance the domestic-violence lobby, and there is a deafening silence from conservatives who pretend to be guardians against federal takeovers of problems that are none of the federal government's business. Local crimes and marital disputes should not be subjects of federal law or spending.

Billions of dollars have flowed from VAWA to the states to finance private victim-advocacy organizations, private domestic-violence coalitions, and the training of judges, prosecutors and police. This tax-funded network is, of course, staffed by radical feminists who teach the presumption of father guilt.

Legislating a special category of domestic violence is very much like legislating a special category of hate crimes. Both create a new level of crimes for which punishment is based on who you are rather than what acts you commit, and the "who" in the view of VAWA and the domestic-violence lobby is the husband and father.

A Justice Department-funded document published by the National Victim Assistance Academy established a widely accepted definition of "violence" that includes such non-criminal acts as

"degradation and humiliation" and "name-calling and constant criticizing." The acts need not be illegal, physical, violent, or threatening; "domestic violence" becomes whatever the woman says it is.

The Final Report of the Child Custody and Visitation Focus Group of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges admitted that "usually judges are not required to make a finding of domestic violence in civil protection order cases." In other words, judges saddle fathers with restraining orders on the wife's say-so without any investigation as to whether it is true or false.

The late Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN), a big advocate of VAWA, admitted that "up to 75 percent of all domestic assaults reported to law enforcement agencies were inflicted after the separation of the couple." Most allegations of domestic violence are made for the purpose of taking the custody of children away from their fathers.

The June issue of the Illinois Bar Journal explains how women use court-issued restraining orders (which Illinois calls Orders of Protection) as a tool for the mother to get sole child custody and even bar the father from visitation. In big type, the magazine proclaims: "Orders of protection are designed to prevent domestic violence, but they can also become part of the gamesmanship of divorce."

The "game" is that mothers can assert falsehoods or trivial marital complaints and thereby get sole custody orders that deprive children of their fathers. This "game" is based on the presumption (popularized by VAWA and the domestic-violence lobby) that fathers are inherently guilty and dangerous.

Congress should not be spending taxpayers' money to deal with marital disputes, and courts should not deprive children of their fathers on a presumption that fathers are dangerous. Congress can help us celebrate Father's Day this year by refusing to reauthorize the costly VAWA boondoggle.