

Rebuilding the Family

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I have long thought we need a much more open discussion in this country about the questions of family and culture. This was the central idea I tried to bring into the presidential race: In order to be successful in our long term challenges we need to rebuild the family and renew the culture in America. I am hopeful that these issues can remain an important part of the conversation heading into November.

Despite some efforts to ignore it, marriage is in crisis. Over the last 50 years in the United States the marriage rate has gone down and the divorce rate has gone up. In 1960, the out of wedlock birth rate was 5%, now it is 36%. We have fewer kids being raised by a mom and dad bonded in marriage. While you can valiantly raise a good child in another setting and we ought to celebrate it when it happens, we know the best place to raise a child is between a mom and dad bonded together for life.

This is an issue far broader than the question of redefining marriage. Divorce and adultery, rising rates of cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births, and a mentality that views children as a burden are all part of the problem.

Anyway you slice it, the social data could not be clearer. Children raised between a mom and dad bonded in marriage—on average—are far more likely to succeed in school, avoid crime, and live happier and healthier lives. The best way to reduce poverty, fight crime, and improve education is the rebuild the family.

Likewise, a vibrant moral culture is necessary to sustain our free politics and free economics. We need a culture that knows right from wrong, encourages virtue and discourages vice. Like many Americans, I am concerned about a coarsening of our culture and government unwilling to address it.

There actually is a lot we can do. We ought to be able to make our economy more conducive to marriage and family. I have proposed increasing the child tax credit, eliminating the marriage penalty, and helped to create marriage development accounts in Washington, DC. Families should be able to keep more of what they earn and have more options in terms of education.

A culture worthy of America will certainly honor the dignity of every life. We need to enact common sense measures to restrict abortion, encourage adoption, and promote abstinence. I have offered laws to encourage broadcast decency and held hearings to address the effects of violence and pornography on our culture. We need to do more to create a moral culture in America.

While I realize these topics can be very personal and difficult to talk about, that does not mean we can ignore them. The future of our land depends in large part upon the strength of our

families and our culture. These are topics too important to ignore and too vital to leave unaddressed.

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