

## *Washington Times*

### **“Study: Cost of divorce to taxpayers high”**

By Cheryl Wetzstein  
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The breakdown of marriage in America costs at least \$112 billion a year, owing to costs of health care, criminal justice, welfare programs and lost income-tax revenue, according to a study released today.

"This study documents for the first time that divorce and unwed childbearing — besides being bad for children — are also costing taxpayers a ton of money," says David Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values (IAV), one of four sponsors of today's study.

Even a small improvement in marriage rates — for example, a 1 percent reduction in the rate of "fragmented families" — would save more than \$1 billion, Mr. Blankenhorn says.

The \$112 billion — which is equivalent to the state budget for New York — stems from "increased taxpayer expenditures" for anti-poverty, criminal justice and education programs, and lower levels of taxes paid by people whose "adult productivity has been negatively affected by increased childhood poverty caused by family fragmentation," says Benjamin Scafidi, an economics professor at Georgia College & State University and principal investigator of the report.

Every year, for instance, the nation supports single-parent families with about \$28 billion in Medicaid and an additional \$35 billion in other welfare programs, says the report, "The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing: First-Ever Estimates for the Nation and All 50 States."

An additional \$9 billion is spent on child-welfare costs.

Single-parent families often struggle with joblessness and involvement in criminal activity, so \$23 billion is estimated in lost tax revenues and \$19 billion is estimated in maintenance of courts, police, prisons and jails.

The report does not call for a reduction of welfare programs or any other services to support single-parent families.

Instead, it argues that divorce and unwed childbearing are grave public concerns, and the

nation would be wise, economically and socially, to invest in strategies that strengthen marriages and families before they break up.

"These numbers represent real people and real suffering," says Randy Hicks, president of the Georgia Family Council, which co-sponsored the study with IAV, the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy (IMAPP) and Families Northwest.

Americans "fight problems like racism, poverty and domestic violence because we understand that the stakes are high," says Mr. Hicks. "And while we'll never eliminate divorce and unwed childbearing entirely, we can certainly be doing more to help marriages and families succeed."

This morning, Mr. Blankenhorn, Mr. Scafidi, Mr. Hicks, IMAPP President Maggie Gallagher and Families Northwest President Jeff Kemp will elaborate on the findings of their study at a news conference in Washington.