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Last summer, the Governor Bill Owens established the Task Force on Child Welfare. To quote my comments at the time, “Looking at the list of government bureaucrats and lackeys appointed convinces me that nothing good will come of this boondoggle - in fact, things will probably get worse.”

I predicted, “I guess we can surmise what THIS task force will find: More money is needed for more training and more social workers. Bigger government and more effective intrusions into non-abusive families in the name of “protecting children” whether they need protection or not.”

I have in my hot little hand, a copy of the final report to the Governor. I am pleased to report that I told you so.

Dividing the recommendations into four categories, I have found that out of 36 recommendations, five recommendations involve increased funds; six involve more training, twelve involve bigger government, and ten involve more effective intrusions into non-abusive families.

Imagine that.

These solutions only attack the symptoms of the problem. They don't even address the incidents that precipitated the formation of the task force: the deaths of four children who were in state custody.

Think about it, if children die while the Department of Human Services (DHS) has legal custody, then all the recommendations of the task force are irrelevant to the Governor's request. Their recommendations focus on prevention prior to removal from the home, and on administrative issues unrelated to child safety.

Not only did they make the same tired old recommendations that have been made for over two decades without success, they didn't even address the problem of the state's responsibility for those deaths. They targeted parents. They just didn't get it. That's what happens when you have a facilitator heading your task force, Gov. She guided that task force to her own pre-determined solution.

Governor, you don't need a task force. After eight years of intensive study, investigation

and hands-on experience, I've got effective, real-life solutions to your problem. And it won't cost the government a dime.

Eliminate absolute immunity. Give the qualified immunity and allow child protective workers and reporters to be held criminally and civilly liable for their mistakes.

Establish meaningful public oversight and demand accountability to investigate DHS agency issues. The agency that commits the abuses cannot investigate itself, or recommend appropriate sanctions for violations of law and policy. This oversight committee must be composed of 51% private citizens, be able to compel evidence and testimony, and their recommendations must be enforceable. You could liken it to an administrative grand jury.

Eliminate confidentiality. Open all records, hearings, and activities to the public. This scrutiny and exposure will insure they dot their i's and cross their t's when they take action to protect a child.

Require police to investigate child abuse. Caseworkers are unqualified to conduct investigations, and it is a conflict of interest to be the investigator and the service provider. Child abuse is a crime. Treat it like one.

The results? Fewer false allegations of child abuse. Fewer cases where they return abused children to the abusers. Fewer violations of law and policy resulting in less liability to government. Fewer children in foster care, more relative placements if placement is required. Fewer terminations of parental rights and unadoptable children. Fewer services providers required. Smaller government. Better quality services.

What's wrong with that?