

The Shame of Massachusetts: Alimony Horror Stories

Please forward this PDF file to anyone considering marrying in Massachusetts, moving to Massachusetts, to members of the business and academic communities, and to members of the legislature and the press.

Introduction From Steve Hitner, President, Mass Alimony Reform

In 2006, I started Mass Alimony Reform with my wife Jeanie and another couple, Cathy and Ernie Ortiz. We were all previously married. Cathy soon started an offshoot of MAR, The 2nd Wives Club, made up women who are forced to pay lifetime alimony to their husbands' ex-wives. We started the organizations because we could not believe what had happened to us in the state's Probate and Family Court system – and because we understand how out-of-touch and out-of-date current laws are.

There is no other way to say it: Massachusetts' no-fault divorce laws relating to lifetime alimony are a disgrace. They must be updated to reflect the social and economic realities of the 21st century – and make Massachusetts resemble our closest neighbors and the rest of the country.

Our most progressive, tolerant state, the first to legislate gay marriage, home to 100 colleges and universities, and to many of the most forward thinking men and women in American history, has alimony laws that deny people their basic constitutional rights in no-fault divorces. That force divorced men and their families to live in poverty and with the threat of bankruptcy and even prison. That deny men and women the right to due process, privacy, and equal protection of the laws. That sometimes inflict permanent harm on men, women, and children.

Alimony is so rare across the country that only 3/10s of one percent of all taxpayers receive it. Alimony is extremely rare in Rhode Island. When awarded, it for only for several years, and it's purpose is rehabilitative, to enable the recipient to be trained and become self-sufficient as soon as possible. In New York, it's awarded for just a few years, in order to give "the dependent spouse" a bridge in which to become independent. Ninety-six percent of those who receive alimony are women, but 70 percent of all divorces are initiated by women. Ninety-eight percent of the people who call me in despair are men or are calling on behalf of men paying alimony.

Massachusetts was one of the first states to update its welfare laws, which affect low-income, largely uneducated women. People who need welfare are allowed several years of state support before they are expected to take care of themselves. But the state never requires self-sufficiency of most educated, middle-class women in no-fault divorces. No-fault means no abuse, addiction, or infidelity. These are just people of any age, even in their 30s and 40s, who have chosen to end their marriages.

Massachusetts Alimony Reform

For contact information, go to: <http://www.massalimonyreform.org/>

Our Mission: To promote peace, independence, and self-sufficiency of the parties to divorce.

In Massachusetts, women who are 35 years old may receive lifetime alimony even if they've inherited millions, received millions in marital assets, have PhDs, and high-paying jobs. It's given to women who are addicts, alcoholics, and compulsive spenders and debtors.

This culture of lifetime alimony in no-fault divorces means that divorced couples – and their families – are never permitted to move on with their lives. Divorce is not the end of a relationship but the beginning an expensive, stressful new life of repeat visits to divorce court and a lifetime of lawyers' bills. Relations throughout families and generations are permanently strained, financially and emotionally.

Because of lifetime alimony, people are forced to return to court throughout life, whenever circumstances change, including job loss, illness, business failure, and retirement. Judges frequently deny requests for reductions, even at retirement or when businesses fail.

What is done as a result of these laws leads to serious abridgements of civil and human rights. For example:

- If a divorced man remarries, his second wife may be forced to contribute her own income and assets, directly or indirectly, to the upkeep of her husband's ex-wife, even if the second wife has small children, lives on a pension, and her resources are modest. Massachusetts is the only state we know of where this routinely happens.
- Women and (gay) men refuse to marry men who have alimony obligations, so they will not be forced to help support their husband's ex-wife.
- On the word of a single judge, law-abiding husbands and fathers are imprisoned for months at a time if they do not have the money to pay their alimony. It is not uncommon for judges to disregard evidence, including that of expert witnesses.
- If a man loses his job or his business fails, a judge may order the man to pay alimony at the original amount, even if this leads to massive debt or bankruptcy.
- Alimony awards do not end or decline at retirement. Men must return to court and petition for reductions, which are often denied.

Why do these laws persist in 2008? The legislature is long overdue in reforming them. But getting lawmakers to support real reform is complicated by the power of the Massachusetts and Boston Bar Associations, to which many lawmakers, who are practicing lawyers, belong. The Bar Associations support non-binding proposals that suggest new ways for judges to think about alimony. The proposals suggest ending lifetime alimony for short-term marriages but continuing the culture of alimony for nearly everyone else. Divorce lawyers win; everyone else loses, including able-bodied women who are entitled to permanent, private, state-imposed welfare.

The Horror Stories: Testimonials And Letters

These are a sample of the stories of men and women who write and call us, desperate for help, nearly every day. They include brief emails, long letters, testimony delivered in the state legislature on Jan. 24, 2008 supporting new legislation, and summaries of cases. Because of lifetime alimony, these are all ongoing cases, and for that reason, we have removed people's names. Where available, we have indicated the county of the divorce. We retain copies of all correspondence in the event a story needs to be verified.

1. **Retired man hit with alimony 27 years after divorce. Norfolk County.**

In 2007, a retired 67-year-old man who is living on a pension from the city of Boston was contacted by a lawyer on behalf of his ex-wife, from whom he was divorced 27 years before. At the time of divorce, they both signed waivers: neither could collect alimony. Now she was seeking alimony because she had squandered her resources – the home he had left her and her own pension. He had personal debt of more than \$30,000. In May 2008, he was ordered to pay her \$312 a week – and pay her attorney's fees. She now wants half his pension. He is being forced to a trial at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars.

His new wife of 15 years lives on a pension from the phone company and is also forced to contribute. He is threatened now with bankruptcy and jail, if he does not pay these bills, and is physically and emotionally distraught. He now takes medication for depression and elevated blood sugar, neither of which he suffered from before.

2. **Businessman fallen on hard times in jail for 90-days, Sept. 8 – Dec. 7, 2008. Must pay \$900,000 alimony arrears. Before jail, his salary was \$48,000 a year. While in jail his company went out of business. Essex County.**

A once wealthy businessman who must pay his ex-wife \$200,000+ per year for life in their no-fault divorce, saw that his investment business was failing in 2003 and alerted the ex-wife to the decline in his income. He had to lay off two sons who worked for him. He returned to court in 2003, hoping to reduce his alimony payments. This was denied. He continued to pay what he could, sometimes \$100,000 per year.

His able-bodied ex-wife, who divorced at age 47, has never been ordered to work and since the divorce in 1995 has received \$2.2 million in alimony.

In the judge's final decision in 2008, he refused to lower the man's payments, even though his business had completely failed by 2007. The judge refused to accept the veracity of his audited tax returns, showing that his income is now \$48,000, although he was not charged with tax fraud. The judge did not accept the testimony of his grown sons who had worked for him, finding them "not credible" witnesses.

The judge ordered that his passport be revoked and that he sign a statement requiring that every penny he makes, including from a tax refund, must be paid to his ex-wife until his debt of \$900,000 is paid.

On Sept. 8, 2008, he was sentenced to jail for 90 days, for not paying \$250,000 toward alimony arrears of \$900,000. Until he went to jail on Sept. 8, he was giving his entire take-home pay to his ex-wife, and providing her with health insurance. His ex-wife has received no alimony and no health insurance since the man's imprisonment.

The judge continues to believe that the man makes \$500,000 a year and must continue paying his ex-wife more than \$200,000 per year in alimony, even though he has no income in jail and the longer he spends in jail, the less likely employment opportunities will be available to him.

He has a new wife of 13 years and 2 small children whose lives have been shattered. His three grown children from his former marriage are caught in the middle of their parents' unending legal problems.

His appeals have been denied, including to the Supreme Judicial Court, and if he is released from jail in December, he may be served with papers for the same debts and resentenced for more than 2 years.

3. Once affluent 60 year-old OB-GYN who moved to the US from Asia in 1978 now lives on welfare in a rented room paid for by his grown daughter, whom he sent to an Ivy League school. Essex County.

A doctor husband and father of three daughters divorced because of irreconcilable differences in 1997. Although she received more than half the marital assets, abundant child support and alimony, and although she worked as a real estate broker, the extremely vindictive ex-wife has systematically ruined his life, filing lawsuits against him for more than 10 years.

Family courts have complied with her ever-increasing demands, even while he supported her and their children, sending them to Ivy League colleges. He is now 60, suffering from cancer, unemployed, and living on transitional public assistance of \$177 a month. His daughter pays the rent for the room he rents in Tewksbury. The summary of his case he sent to Mass Alimony Reform is 10 pages long. He continues to have to appear in court because his ex-wife's legal actions. He cannot afford an attorney.

He writes: "All I had was taken away or confiscated. I have no IRA, no pension, no stock, no property. Unemployed and sanctioned by DOR's levy [Dept. of Revenue]. Except a 11+ years old car, I have nothing. ZERO, nothing.

"Financially and mentally, I have been totally crushed. My self-educated "attorney ex-wife" and her Boston attorneys have been legally manipulating and complicating a regular divorce into accusing and suing more than 37 judges, court clerks, five Massachusetts court, her own former Boston attorneys/law firm, and even the Attorney General of the

State of Massachusetts. Being “pro se,” that is, representing myself, I was helplessly and hopelessly crushed like an egg being crushed by a big rock.

“What has happened to me can happen again to other members in our Alimony Reform Group. This is modern slavery and life-long torture to the innocent, hardworking husbands and to the second wives. The harder the husband works, the more the ex-wife demands and gets rewarded. It encourages the ex-wife only to sit at home, to sue, to demand and to receive more and more. Even after knowing that I had undergone radical right kidney cancer surgery with failing remaining left kidney complicated with other medical problems, my ex-wife has been aggressively filing ‘criminal actions’ against me. I have worked very hard for more than 25 years; all of what I have earned had been taken away or confiscated. It is like a monster has eaten one’s flesh, sucked out all of one’s blood and now the monster wants to chew one’s bones.”

4. 80-year-old man afflicted with cancer and heart problems, living on ever-diminishing investments in Florida, forced to pay alimony to ex-wife, a retired psychotherapist.

He writes: I am an 80-year-old man who was divorced in 1979 at my ex-wife’s wishes. She moved out, with our children, in 1975.

I paid alimony and child support, sending our children to private college (including Ivy League schools). They are all grown and married and/or have children today.

Prior to our separation, I supported my then-wife through graduate school. She became a social worker, specializing in family therapy. She worked for an agency and then maintained a private practice for about 25 years.

Since my child support ended, I have continued to pay alimony of \$10,400 annually... If the monthly check is ever late, she immediately calls.

Although I had a thriving leather tanning business for over 40 years, in the last decade it went downhill due to shoe-manufacturing moving offshore to Asian countries. I was unable to even sell my business.

Additionally, my health has declined. I have had a triple bypass, undergone two surgeries for herniated disks and spinal stenosis, have uncontrolled diabetes, and have had a pacemaker installed.

My second wife of 23 years has died, having suffered with lupus for the last 15 years of her life. I remarried four years ago. My current wife has undergone cancer surgery.

Needless to say, my investments, which were meant to support me, are deteriorating rapidly.

I think it is unconscionable for me to continue paying alimony at this stage of my life, for the rest of my life.

UPDATE: Since I sent you my letter, I have suffered the additional medical problems:

I have had a heart attack and have had surgery because one artery bypass stopped functioning and required two stents implanted, plus an additional artery blockage was removed.

Divorced in Massachusetts, 1979, Living in Florida

5. Professor at one of state's leading graduate schools teaching past 70, because if he retires he will have to pay lifetime alimony from his retirement accounts. Middlesex County.

He writes: "Ex-wife voluntarily retired at about 62. Why work, if I pay alimony? The appeals court approved the original alimony award, which I have been paying almost twenty years, admitting that the payments are large enough for her not only to support herself but to save money.

I am still working at 70. The ex-wife got half of the retirement accounts, but there has been no reduction in alimony since she started drawing on those accounts. I am liable for alimony the rest of my life. If I do retire, I will have to pay the alimony and support myself out of my half of the retirement accounts, even though the ex-wife should be able to support herself out of the half that she received (and she presumably has savings on top of that). Since her retirement, the ex-wife has used the alimony, an unknown amount of inheritance, and social security to travel the world and to give thousands of dollars to a grandchild, while I continue to work."

6. Second wife forced to put her disabled 8-week old baby into daycare to get menial job because husband's business failed after 9/11. Court refuses to grant husband reduction in alimony, even though his ex-wife is in her 30s and is a registered nurse. (Testimony 1/24/08).

In 2001, I married a man who was divorced in Massachusetts, and ordered to pay lifetime alimony to his ex-wife [then in her mid-30s, and a registered nurse.] In the months following the tragedy of Sept. 11th, my husband's business - along with many other consulting businesses - began to fail. With the crushing financial obligations to his ex-wife, he worked 100 hours per week. His blood pressure reached 160 over 110 and his doctors told him he was in imminent danger of heart attack if he did not take care of himself.

With our bank accounting dwindling, he reluctantly sold his failing business, at a loss, in 2003. We also learned that his ex-wife, who is a registered nurse, had started a business of her own. She was traveling the world on vacations, and driving a high-end car while my husband and I were forced to share one leased Honda. I was forced to put my 8-week old newborn baby (who has been diagnosed with significant developmental and physical disabilities) in daycare, and go back to work, just to make ends meet. Our finances were a disaster. We had no choice but to go back to court for alimony relief.

After months and months in the court system, and many thousands of dollars spent on legal bills - further digging a giant financial hole - the judge made her ruling. Because my husband and I were a “double income family,” he could not be relieved of his alimony obligation. The judge cited Cooper vs. Cooper and Silva vs. Silva in her ruling, indicating that because his new wife was working, I should be able to pay for our household expenses - thus allowing him to give more of his income to his ex-wife.

In effect, I had been forced to put my daughter in a poor situation and work in a very undesirable job - just to help keep my family afloat, so we wouldn't lose our home. The judge then used my salary as a “given” to calculate how much my husband should pay his ex-wife. I was horrified to learn that we were essentially being punished, because I had tried to be responsible.

My husband has always, and will always, support his children. But my daughter and I are suffering greatly, because of the alimony he must pay to his ex-wife until the day he dies. And if anything should happen to him, my daughter and I will be left essentially penniless, as our family has zero savings, and all of his life insurance is also ordered to go to his ex.

Had [new legislation] already been in place, my family would not be continuing to struggle - more than 7 years after my husband's ex-wife divorced him.

7. College professor with small side business forced to pay 120% of academic salary in lifetime alimony to ex-wife in her 30s. (Testimony 1/24/08)

I am a college professor from _____. I would like to thank the committee for listening to our important issue today. I believe the practice of handling alimony is currently inconsistent, inequitable and inefficient among Massachusetts's residents. Moreover, our legal system is currently out-of-touch compared to other states, which tend to limit the duration or distribution of alimony.

In 2000, my ex-wife divorced me during the height of the dot.com boom. At the time of divorce, the total payments to my ex-wife were set at 120% of my take-home academic pay, of which 72% was alimony. The balance of payments came from a small side business that I ran. After the divorce, I needed to push my “side business” into a full-time venture. This required over 70 hours per week above my full time academic job. Once 9/11 occurred, my business, along with many other businesses in the financial services sector, failed.

When I went back to court seeking modification, the court spent more time investigating the income of my wife, rather than my ex-wife. The court said in its findings: “The income and assets of a second spouse are part of the circumstances relevant to the ability of parents to use their own resources to contribute to the support.” And, “Because the income of a second spouse contributes to the support of the current household, the obligated spouse has more of his or her own money with which to satisfy alimony.”

As a result, the court denied my request to eliminate alimony and concluded that alimony needs to continue without term limit. My ex-wife (who is in her mid 30s and a registered

nurse), does not need to ever work again, while my wife works horribly long days, nights and weekends to support her. Given the length of my first marriage, and mandated alimony payment until death, there is the great likelihood that my alimony payments will exceed the length of my marriage by a factor of 300-400%!

This ruling has created extraordinary stress on my working wife and young (special needs) child who was placed in childcare at 8 weeks of age. We are perplexed why the courts would require a second spouse to support a relatively young, educated, able-bodied ex-spouse, indefinitely. . . . Existing laws in Massachusetts are antiquated and need to change, now.

Alimony reform is long overdue in the state of Massachusetts.

8. 15-year-old boy of a second marriage has fewer educational opportunities than his siblings from the first marriage because, after the children from first marriage are emancipated, his father must pay lifetime alimony to an able-bodied ex-wife who is never required to become self-sufficient.

My name is _____, and I am 15 years old.

My mother and I are my father's second family. Last May, when my [half] brother graduated from college, his mother, my father's first wife, was awarded alimony by the state. The judge did not consider any expenses associated with my father's second family. The opinion of the courts was that I, as well as my mother, did not matter.

I am proud that my father financially supported my brother and my sister, both from his first marriage. The law needs to be changed in order for my father to be able to treat all of his children in the same financial manner. It seems inconsistent that, while the state does not allow someone to be married to two spouses at a time, it may require you to support two at a time, even after assets have been equally divided.

My father continues to work hard to advance his career, while his ex-spouse collects money from him, even though she is not a part of the reason he has been successful. I find it unfair that an ex-spouse can retain her financial place in my father's life, but she does not live with my father, as one of the key figures in his life. She can simply collect a check because of a law written over 200 years ago, when she would have been considered my father's property. I believe that this outdated law is used as a tool to take advantage of someone else's hard work and success.

I hope to go to college in a few years, but this financial burden placed upon my father has prevented him from successfully saving for college. I have a job, and I've worked there for the sole reason of saving for college. As the law is currently written, it seems that my father's ex-spouse is more important than my family, even though his life with her has long since passed.

At this point in my life I look forward to finishing high school, college, a career and someday marriage. I'd like this to be here in the state that I have grown up in. This law, if

not changed, will probably make me reconsider working and living in Massachusetts later on in my life.

10. A divorced woman from Rhode Island woman dating a divorced man in Massachusetts offers her observations. (Testimony 1/24/08)

I left an abusive 18-year marriage approximately 10 years ago and have always lived in Rhode Island. I did not receive any alimony and was told by my high paid attorney that only in extreme cases is alimony awarded in Rhode Island and that I had skills even though I was home raising my children for 8 years while my husband was building his business and that my life style would change after divorce. This was just a fact of life.

I am absolutely outraged that people in Massachusetts automatically assume that when there is a divorce, the man has initiated the divorce and has run off with a 20- year-old woman. This is insane. First of all, Massachusetts is a no-fault divorce state. Assets are divided and both parties agree to end the marriage. No one should be indebted to the other for life.

I have been dating a man in Massachusetts for six years. His wife initiated the divorce. He did not want to get divorced. His wife worked while they were married but stopped working after the divorce. She did not want to go to counseling. She chose to end the marriage. There was no abuse, alcohol or infidelity. She simply did not want to be married any longer. Yet, my boyfriend is treated like a criminal. I have sat in the back of the courtroom and watched how a judge treats men. It is absolutely unprofessional as well as insulting. It's as if the man is automatically guilty and sentenced because he was a recipient of divorce. The judge barely allows the man to speak. Women lie and are not held accountable. Where is justice and honor in Massachusetts' courtrooms?

The ways of the Probate Court System in Massachusetts' are the "little evil secret" . . . a way to keep the "brotherhood" alive. The only best interest that a divorce attorney has in Mass is his/her own. They love giving their clients the line that they can "modify" at anytime. This means thousands of wasted dollars spent to go nowhere. And the attorneys know it. Who loses? People who have faith in the justice system. They are re-victimized time and time again. Yes, this is the secret in Mass that everyone is catching on to.

Nowhere else is there the "entitlement" mentality that the women in Massachusetts have. When I speak with people in Rhode Island and mention lifetime alimony, they laugh at me and tell me that I am lying. Don't be fooled. This is the norm in Massachusetts. Some will lead you to believe that lifetime alimony rarely occurs. Women are living with partners, boyfriends, etc. and still getting alimony. Women are capable of working, have skills, experience, education, etc. and choose not to work in order to play the victim role. They are victims of their own self-pity and Massachusetts enables this mentality. How sad. In addition, women have no reason to work out a marriage because they feel if they get divorced, their lifestyle will not change. In many cases, it gets better.

By the way, in a case where a woman is married for 50 or 60 years as some have proclaimed . . . the man leaves and the woman is alone, perhaps it may be necessary. What about cases where a couple is married for say, 10 or 15 years . . . you mean to tell me a man should be enslaved for the rest of his life, never able to retire? It is amazing to me that anyone would ever consider getting married in Massachusetts. I have already warned my two sons about the dirty little secret that perpetuates in Mass and how men are treated as criminals.

What about the women who are alcoholics, abusive, or cheat? No one is talking about the women in Mass, just that every man that's divorced in is no good and should have to be sentenced for life. Yes, for life. A man can never retire or he will be sent to jail. I am not making this up.

I went through hell with my ex-husband. I knew that if I left him, not only would I be risking my life, but I would have a tough road ahead and my comfortable lifestyle would change. There was no sympathy from the judge, even though I thought my case was extreme and I have permanent hearing loss as a result of the abuse.

I am happy to tell you that I am raising my two teenage sons and working full-time as a high school teacher. The message that I have taught my children is that with strength, hard work, and faith, you can achieve your goals. I have volunteered many years with the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence and have done public speaking, talk radio, television appearances, press releases, etc. My message has always been the same. Women need to become self-sufficient and responsible members of society, regardless of what they have been through. At no time would I ever think to encourage women to have an "entitlement" mentality, even in the most horrible situations such as abuse.

11. My divorce agreement has me paying alimony for the rest of my life. I am a public school teacher who makes \$70K annually. My former wife is able-bodied and works full time, but has no incentive to better herself. I have paid alimony for the past 13 years and never missed a payment. As I approach retirement I would love some encouraging news that perhaps my situation could change. I do have a new lawyer who states that without some judicial precedence, relief does not appear forthcoming.
12. In 2004, I was divorced in Mass after 10 years of marriage. My marriage began and ended in Mass. I currently live in Texas. I am 47 years old. I am paying more in alimony now each month than what I made when married. My ex laughs and says that she will never work, even though she has a college degree, a public school teacher's certificate and many years experience as a teacher. She now enjoys being a full-time vacationer. She has a BMW. I have paid faithfully for 4 years and am now close to insolvency. My payments equal 60% of my gross, thus leaving very little to cover basic expenses.
13. This must be changed. I have no problems supporting my kids, but to support someone who can, but chooses not to work for life is wrong.
14. I am currently paying alimony to my ex-wife who is a habitual alcoholic. Sobriety is nowhere in sight. Do I have to continue to pay alimony to help support her addictions?

Amesbury, MA

15. I just heard about this website on the radio, and I have been raped by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and would like to get married some day but can't afford another financial hit. Is there anything I can do?

Lynn, MA

16. Lost home, retirement, and must pay \$1300 per month in alimony to bipolar, life-threatening ex. No children together. No money left to enjoy life. Six years of depression and working long weekend night shifts to make alimony payments.

Divorce judgment in MA, Living in Florida

17. I am a man who has been divorced since 2001. I have met the love of my life. We want to get married. She has 2 children from her former husband. He is paying child support only.

I am paying alimony and child support to an ex who chooses to work part-time, at less than half her normal pay, and has been cohabiting with a man for over 8 years. Her potential income is \$100,000 (registered nurse, BSN, 25 years of experience).

Bottom line is we have decided that we can't get married until this is fixed. It is a very sad thing for us since we both strongly believe in the sacrament of marriage.

18. My husband pays his ex-wife a large amount of money per week. She is living with her boyfriend who makes a lot of money and she has a good job. She kept an insurance policy on my husband so if he dies she can still get her alimony payments. She has said she will never remarry so that she can keep getting alimony from my husband, and she has said that she needs to look out for herself.

She has 2 brand new very expensive vehicles. Where is the justice in that when my husband is the one working his butt off to support her? It is very frustrating when she has only looked at him as money in their marriage and still does. She wanted the marriage over because she didn't love him anymore – but she can still take from him. There were a lot of marital assets that she received as well – more than he received. When is this new law going to be looked at? Most women work now. How is it right that people can take advantage of another person like this and it be legal?

19. Just got back from court yesterday. In the middle of a divorce. The judge stated that I would need to pay alimony for life at a rate of 33% of my income despite the fact that I am committed to supporting my son through college. Need help.

Maynard, MA

20. It's really ironic that they made new laws to stop people from abusing welfare a short time ago. They now have a program that makes people go out and learn skills and get to work in a certain amount of time and then they cut off benefits... Yet its okay for husbands to pay alimony to lazy ex-wives who absolutely have the ability to work but choose not to so they can live off of their cash cow forever, and the courts let them get away with it. Many

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have live-in boyfriends who reap the benefits of that check paid by their girlfriend's ex-husband also.

Imagine being married 22 years ... having your wife decide that Keno is great fun to the tune of spending her own children's college fund that you've put together and charging up credit card debt that you must work three jobs to pay off – because she refuses to work.... Only to have the courts grant lifetime alimony so she still has plenty of Keno cash. Nice state we live in. This has just been so unfair to so many hard-working people.

21. Once wealthy man ordered to jail and reduced to poverty. Ordered to pay more in alimony than he makes. Ex-wife squanders \$2 million in assets and cash in 4 years and keeps getting alimony.

I am a self-employed investment manager and during the late 90s my business was highly successful. That all ended when the “dot com” bubble burst in 2000. My marriage and the stock market both fell apart at about the same time, and after 5 months of fruitless marriage

Despite the downturn in my business, I felt we would be able to weather the storm because I had accumulated significant savings, retirement funds and real estate and was still earning a reasonable income. Wow, was I wrong! This court has taken action that has now left both of us broke and requiring us to continuously battle in court for 7 years so far, with no end in sight.

When you get divorced, there are two financial aspects to that: division of assets and ongoing support. If you are self-employed, you really get screwed. Although my company didn't have any assets, the court decided that the business was worth around \$1.5 million because it had made a lot of money in the previous 5 years. So the division of assets essentially went like this: My wife got all the cash, all the real estate, and most of my retirement plan. I got to keep my job.

Of course my business didn't really have value. I couldn't sell it because I AM my business. Nobody would ever pay me \$1.5 million just for a company name.

Now you would think that since they already included my business in the division of assets, anything more would be double dipping, but no, she gets half the company value plus 33% of the company income as ongoing alimony.

The problem here however is that they didn't base the alimony on what I was currently making but on what my average income was over the past 3 years! I told my female attorney, “I can't agree to that, my income has gone down significantly!” She said, “No judge is going to believe that.” This was my first experience with a fundamental principle of the Family Court: “You are assumed to be a liar.”

My attorney said, “If you don't agree to this and you before the judge, you are going to end up with a much worse deal.” I said, “What if I can't pay that much alimony?” She replied, “The alimony provision merges, so if your income drops significantly, you can always go back for a modification.” I learned the hard way that this was not true. Even worse,

getting a modification is much harder because I “agreed” to the deal, rather than having a judge order the alimony amount.

So in November of 2002, I signed the deal. My ex-wife got \$830,000 of real estate with no mortgage, \$462,000 in cash and \$365,000 of my retirement funds PLUS was awarded \$180,000 a year in alimony for 20 years.

The next year (2003), I earned \$142,000, but paid alimony of \$180,000. I filed a complaint for modification to reduce my alimony. This seemed like an open-and-shit case - certainly I can't pay more in than I am earning! I was shocked when the court dismissed the complaint by summary judgment and ordered me to pay my ex-wife's attorneys fees.

The following year (2004), I filed a new complaint for modification. I was still earning less than I was paying in alimony each month. I had been living off my remaining retirement funds, which were now depleted. In September, they brought me in to court on contempt, because I had fallen behind on my alimony payments. I told the judge that I had no assets, other than the mobile home that my 80-year-old mother lives in. I asked the judge if she wanted me to sell the mobile home. She said that was my problem, not hers. She said I had to pay \$25,000 immediately or go to jail for contempt. I didn't have \$25,000. I didn't even have \$1000. Another lesson learned about Probate Court: “You are presumed to be guilty.”

They took my belongings. They took my tie and belt - so I couldn't hang myself. They put handcuffs on me. They put shackles on my legs and marched me through the courthouse to the jail cell.

Thank God for friends. My friend's father-in-law loaned me \$25,000 so that I could get out of jail and sell my mother's mobile home. So for the year 2004, I earned \$64,000 but paid \$68,000 in alimony.

Unfortunately my ex-wife is financially very irresponsible. She received all that cash, retirement plan and real estate and should have been able to live very comfortably, but she blew it all in less than 4 years. Even the \$400,000 I have paid her so far in alimony is gone. Over \$2 million all together is gone. I have no idea how she went through all that money so fast. She's living in a small apartment now.

At this point (Oct. 2007) I have no assets remaining. I am over \$150,000 in debt. I will be filing for bankruptcy sometime in the next few months. I had no capital to invest in my business. Once I file for bankruptcy, I can no longer be employed as an investment manager. I have no other special job skills.

My trial date is coming up in January 2008. It sounds like the court will require me to pay at least \$80,000 in arrears (and perhaps as much as \$500,000) plus my own attorney fees plus \$10,000 of my ex-wife's attorney fees, and I have no idea about how much alimony I will have to pay going forward. Despite its name, the Family Court has no interest in protecting families, only in destroying them.

UPDATE: October 2008. He now pays his ex-wife \$2000 per month in lifetime alimony, but because he cannot afford the high cost of living in Massachusetts on top of that, he recently moved to a poor, Southern state, where he hopes to find work.

22. Thirty-year marriage. I made all the dough so my wife could stay home to raise and home school 4 kids. Then I got fired and we decided to make a life style change. After 7 years my wife backed out. The court imputed income to me of \$100K based on my degrees, a bogus vocational expert, and my salary in a high tech job that I lost 9 years ago. Awarded \$26K alimony and escrowed two years of alimony from my assets. Wife ended up with 66% of assets. At 57 and out of high tech for 9 years, who is going to offer me \$100K a year? Forced labor! Forced poverty!

Hardwick, MA

23. I pulled out my "Findings of Fact" statement on my last try in 2001 on an attempt at modification [to get my payments lowered]. The judge has written 17 reasons why she was granting my ex an increase [while I sought a decrease]. On line fifteen she writes, "The defendant is able to pay the amount of support set forth in the judgment modification. The defendant does have the benefit of the \$34,000 per year earned annually by his present wife, as well as living in property owned by her. He has overtime available to him. Alimony is deductible to him.

24. I have been the victim of permanent lifetime alimony since 2003. The judge in this case said in court during the hearing that it would be unconstitutional for her to set a time limit for alimony. I don't make much money and now have to pay \$700 per month in alimony to my ex-wife. It is impossible to get that reduced (ie "better chance of seeing God, one lawyer told me).

I make about \$54,000 per year gross, and 9.5% of that must go to a retirement account, not an optional account. My ex-wife works full-time. I have been silent because this issue has destroyed me financially, and emotionally it consumes me.

My wife had 2 children from a previous marriage. The judge said,"That didn't matter. You are still going to pay alimony or go to jail... This alimony basically takes all of my discretionary funds.

Amherst, MA

25. I am married to a wonderful man and have been for five years. We both have been divorced for about eight years and we married in 2001.

My husband's ex-wife receives \$800 a month from him and has a \$100,000 life insurance policy. I, on the other hand, receive not one cent from my ex because I elected not to. I work every day because I have pride in the fact that I can support myself and do not want or need a handout from him.

My husband's ex does not work and has no intention to for the foreseeable future. She lives rent free with her parents, is getting \$200 a week in spending money, and is probably

signing up for Massachusetts new health care for low income households, even though my husband is giving her money to purchase health insurance.

When my husband goes to court for a maintenance adjustment, she doesn't have to account for any of her money. She left the marriage with all the furniture and \$220,000 in cash. My husband left with the clothes on his back and \$80,000 in cash. If she tells the judge she has not more money, the judge accepts it. If my husband told the judge he has no more money, he is in contempt.

They also have taken my salary into consideration. I feel this is unjust because I did not marry her.

The \$11,000 we pay her a year could go a long way towards a house. As it is now we live in a mobile home but cannot take a chance on a mortgage, as we never know when she might take him back to court for an increase.

The biggest problem we have is that there is no end to alimony. It is for life unless she gets married. We all know how long it took people to get off welfare. Why work if a check is coming in for the rest of your life?

26. I am beginning the divorce process and agree to temporary support but am concerned about being impoverished for the little time I have left. I am 44 with two kids. Can I prevent this from happening?

Greenfield, MA

27. Although I now live in Georgia, I went through a divorce in Mass a couple of years ago that set up some brutal conditions. It's a long story, and I don't want to have the "victim mentality, but as an FYI, I actually served a couple of days in a county detention center (here in Georgia) last year on "contempt" charges because I got behind on alimony due to job loss.

28. I am in Florida and my husband has cancer. Five years ago, his ex went back for more alimony due to a loophole in the mediation agreement.... She knows the prognosis is poor, and did it anyway, and the courts awarded her the money anyway.

29. I have questions about marrying a wonderful guy, who is paying out thousands every month in alimony to a deadbeat ex-wife and her live-in boyfriend. We want to marry, but will my income as an RN be fair game for her in court?

Newbury, MA

30. Not sure where to begin with my story. My husband was recently awarded alimony for being lazy, unemployed, verbally and physically abusive, and he pays no child support while I am the primary caretaker of our child. I cry everyday. I need advice and help.

Plainville, MA

31. I am a divorced father of two kids who is paying outrageous child support and alimony for the next 18 years and had to file for bankruptcy.

32. “I am uncertain as to my future and future of my children. I will likely lose everything I own in time and then be jailed for not being able to give more.”

I was married for 19 years. I was the primary caretaker of our four children. I cooked, cleaned, helped them with their schoolwork, sole financial provider, built a home for my family, acquired property on Martha’s Vineyard through extra entrepreneurial endeavors, coached all of my children in soccer, basketball and baseball (two teams each season and often a third). I did all the home maintenance, yard work, etc and was teaching my children responsibility to contribute to our family life by doing chores, etc.

My ex-wife contributed nothing to our marriage and nothing to family other than driving one child to an event while I was coaching at another. With no love in my life from the person who was supposed to be a partner and no sex for 6-7 years I voluntarily moved out telling my wife I will continue to pay the mortgage, bills, give her money to care for our children and continue to go over to help take care of the property and be a father to our children.

Within 30 days, with advice from her family and an adversarial attorney, she pulled 209A Restraining Orders on me and served me with divorce papers. It has been living hell ever since.

The Judge in charge of our divorce fosters adversity and finds me at fault at every turn. He has never allowed a motion I’ve made to the court and never found her guilty of contempt. On the other hand, he has allowed every Motion filed by her, found me guilty of every Complaint for Contempt she has filed and orders me to pay my ex’s attorney’s fees whenever we are in Court.

During the divorce he ordered me to pay child support, alimony, mortgage on the marital home, all property taxes on the marital home and land on the Vineyard and my children’s schooling expenses. I was paying over \$92,000/year on an “imputed” income of \$80,000 when I wasn’t working.

Every time I asked for relief by filing a Complaint for Modification the judge just said, “I understand you think you are paying too much, But as I keep saying, I can always make up for it in the division of assets.” At division of assets he kept the support payments the same and ordered I pay my ex \$80,000 additional from the assets! It was not a fair split at all and he did NOT make up for the year and a half I was paying way too much. He forced me to put \$145,000 in debt on credit cards, otherwise I faced jail.

In the last almost three years since the divorce the judge has refused to modify the support orders. I am making \$80,000/year and, after paying support and my children’s schooling expenses. I am \$150/week in debt before I have to borrow more for my own living expenses. I am working full time and rapidly going into debt to stay out of jail and further in debt to eat and live.

Since June of 2007 I have been forced over \$125,000 in debt. Even living at a minimal subsistence level I am going further in debt.

There is no end in sight as to the damage the judge will do.

Mind you, my ex DOESN'T work. Why should she when I am paying her \$800/week plus 65% of my children's college expenses?

I am uncertain as to my future and future of my children. I will likely lose everything I own in time and then be jailed for not being able to give more.

33. Man paying lifetime alimony who owns business suffering from economic downturn is refused modification . Forced into bankruptcy and uncertain future, can never retire. Starts crusade for alimony reform. (Testimony 1/24/08) Middlesex County..

I was married to my first wife for 23 years. 13 years after we married, I started and operated, as I do to this day, a small copy and printing business in Marlborough. We had major disagreements over financial matters. She filed the complaint for divorce in 1995. The divorce was finalized in 1999. She received 2/3 the equity in our home, all the items in the home, a \$35,000 auto, health insurance, life insurance on my life in the amount of \$500,000 and \$45,000 per year in alimony for life. She lives in Florida in retirement. Child Support was not an issue.

Due to the economy and a downturn in business after 9/11, it became impossible for me to make the alimony payments. After exhausting all my credit card limits, borrowing all I could on both my home and business assets, I filed for a modification in May of 2005. The process took until January of 2006, at which time the Probate Judge said that my complaint was not credible because, due to the fact that I had my own business, I must be able to manipulate my income.

Financial statements and income tax returns prepared by my CPA, credit reports, and my CPA's testimony were not considered credible by the judge. I asked the Judge what will happen when I ran out of credit to borrow to pay the alimony, her answer was "Let me know when you run out of credit, and I will put you in Jail" The Judge advised my new wife to use her income to help me pay alimony, or I was going to jail. My current wife took on an additional second job, and I was forced into bankruptcy.

I was so upset by this experience that I began an organization to change the law, and posted a website, www.massalimonyreform.org. To my surprise, it was not just men responding to my website, but the majority were women. These were 2nd wives of men who are burdened with the support for life of their husband's ex-wife, while the ex-wife is told by the Probate Court that it is their right to never have to work again.

The Welfare laws have been amended to only allow someone to collect for 3-5 years; however, the current alimony law encourages and condemns an ex-spouse to marital welfare and dependency for life. We must change the law to allow for a sunset for the payer and an end of life long dependency for the ex-spouse.

34. Second wife who got no alimony in her own divorce now works two jobs, to help husband pay lifetime alimony to able-bodied ex-wife, who never has to work.

Today I want to tell you some of the injustices that have happened to me and my husband under the current alimony statute and why I feel that it needs to be reformed.

I was married for 23 years to my ex-husband and divorced in New York in 1996. As I understand it, that would be considered a long-term marriage in Massachusetts, as it was in New York. When our divorce was finalized, our assets were divided equally, and I was told by my lawyer to go out and get a job, that there was no alimony in New York, only short-term maintenance that I received in the form of child support for 2 years until my youngest was emancipated.

Having raised the children, I had not held a full-time job for 21 years. In order to survive and get health insurance, I went to work as a single Mom with 2 teenagers. In hindsight, this proved to be a great help to me, as from it, I regained my self-confidence and self-esteem and went on with my life...and this lack of dependency on my ex-husband has allowed me to maintain a cordial relationship with him, which in turn, has fostered a healthy environment for our kids.

On the other hand, my current husband was married in New York State in 1972, and his divorce was finalized in Massachusetts in 1999. This too was a long-term marriage like mine. His ex-spouse got alimony for life. She is healthy and perfectly capable of working, but continues to refuse to support herself. She has been told by the Probate court that it is her right as a Massachusetts ex-spouse to never have to work or support herself again and that it is her ex-husband's obligation to fulfill that right. While the legislative branch has reformed the welfare and unemployment benefits limiting their terms, it has not reformed alimony for life

My story is not yet over. Due to the oppressive alimony payment and the down turn of his business, my husband went in for modification 2 years ago. The Probate judge refused him any relief and in her findings said that I should supplement my husband's income so he could continue to make the alimony payments and avoid jail. Last fall, after my husband reluctantly filed for bankruptcy, I got a second job to do this. As a second wife, I find it appalling and totally unfair that I should have to work 2 jobs to help support his ex-spouse who resides in Florida. While many of our friends are retiring or looking forward to retirement, we are not. We can't.

If the law is not reformed, we will never be able to enjoy the fruits of our labor. We are forced into this involuntary servitude of paying alimony for life. I find it ironic that in New York, I was not granted alimony, but now that I am married, living and working in Massachusetts, I am forced to help pay alimony to my husband's ex-wife.

35. Family court permits ex-wife to retire at 40-years-old from her career as a paralegal. (Testimony 1/24/08)

I was born and raised in Massachusetts. Before, during and shortly after our marriage, both my spouse and I worked. During the marriage, my wife attended college, received a paralegal degree, and became employed in a law firm, as a paralegal. We have two beautiful children. We lived a conservative lifestyle, relying on only my income, while our children were young. When the children were older, my ex-spouse was employed outside of the home.

I did not want to accept that my ex-spouse was divorcing me. I wanted to keep our family together. Of course, the Probate Court system forced me to accept the divorce.

There were negotiations on the part of my counsel for a settlement that could possibly have avoided alimony. My attorney lobbied for about one minute. After a costly trial [my share: \$50,000], I was to pay alimony until either: my death, the death of my ex-spouse or the remarriage of my ex-spouse.

The ex-spouse apparently prefers alimony because she doesn't have to "earn it" and probably because she knows that it will hurt me to pay it to her. This situation has polarized the relationships of our entire family.

I have no doubt that alimony can be appropriate in certain temporary situations. However, not in the case where a skilled, educated, financially productive ex-spouse simply chooses to stop working.

The alimony, which would be used to get my ex-spouse on her feet, is keeping her off her feet. Even though our youngest child is 18 years old, my ex-spouse chooses not to work. I believe that everyone, including my ex-spouse, should be encouraged to be as self-sufficient, self-supporting and as responsible as they can be.

I ask that alimony be limited in time to 1/2 the length of the marriage, with a maximum of 12 years. ... Knowing that there is an end to alimony will steer both those who pay and those who receive to a new and better life.

My ex-wife retired at 40 years old. When might I retire? Doesn't unnecessary alimony create an entitlement mentality?

Divorce is horrible enough in and of itself. The citizens of Massachusetts deserve an opportunity to move on with their lives. Are we not entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? I would like to remarry someday, but can you tell me how to explain to that remarkable woman, that by marrying me, a significant portion of the income that she earns, might have to be paid to a woman that she doesn't even know and who left me perhaps 20 years earlier?

The alimony law is clearly broken. I pray that your hearts and ears are open to the truth of this situation. You can fix the process. Are you willing to?

36. Newly divorced man ordered to pay alimony to ex-wife who makes \$90,000 per year. He is engaged but fears his new wife's income would be used to allow courts to force him to pay more alimony.

I am a newly divorced father of 2 nearly grown children and was ordered to pay \$21,000 in alimony although my ex wife has advanced degrees, and a salary of \$90,000.

None of the court-ordered alimony payments are designated to go towards child support - only alimony to "equalize income". In addition to the alimony, I have been ordered to provide health insurance although my ex gets benefits through her employer at a highly reduced cost.

I am planning on getting re-married, but the 2nd wife information has caused my fiancée and me to reconsider, as my ex has been extremely aggressive in her pursuit of vengeance. Although I was often the primary caregiver throughout my marriage and the failure of my marriage was partially due to her infidelity, the final judgment stated that she had contributed more in raising the children (no evidence of this was presented), and only my infidelity (which followed hers and neither was documented in any way) was mentioned in the judgment.

Should I be very worried about the 2nd wife alimony issue? Is there any way to protect my fiancé's assets?

37. Second wife forced to pay alimony to first wife who works full-time and does not live beyond her means. First wife's lifestyle must match her ex-husband's. (Testimony 1/24/08).

In May of 2005, I married _____. This was a second marriage for each of us.

I was aware that _____ I paid his former spouse an amount of \$39,000. per year in alimony until the age of 65. At the time of his divorce, his former spouse had a disabling injury and was not able to work. Their two children were of age and fully emancipated.

I had three children from a previous marriage, two of whom were emancipated, one minor child remaining at home while attending school. I had a prenuptial agreement executed in the State of Massachusetts that clearly states that all of my income and assets would be completely separate from _____'s both prior to and after the marriage.

In August 2006, my husband, along with 20% of his company's workforce, was laid off from his job. His income went from \$100,000. per year to \$24,000. per year. This was a substantial material change of circumstances and he filed for a modification of alimony with the Middlesex Family and Probate Court.

When Ms. _____, my husband's ex-wife, submitted her financial statement to the courts, we learned that she was now working full time in the allied nursing profession. She was earning a salary of \$32,000 - her expenses on her own financial statement submitted to the courts were stated to be \$28,700.

In early January 2007, my husband, his attorney, his ex-wife and her attorney, met for a pre-trial conference. It was at this time that her attorney informed my husband and his attorney that he would petition the court that my income (the second spouse) be included as total household income available to pay alimony. My husband stated that we had a pre-nup and he wasn't entitled to my information; the opposing attorney argued that the his living situation had improved because of my income, he now had more income available to pay alimony under the premise of total household income. My husband had started a new job at the same as his previous salary of \$100,000.

I would like to add that there was no domestic violence, alcohol abuse, desertion or adultery in their marriage. It was an uncontested no fault divorce. Additionally, prior to January of 2006, I had never spoken to, had any contact with my husband's ex-wife.

On January 20, 2006, there was a hearing held at the Middlesex Family & Probate Court on the Modification of Alimony. When we arrived at the court house, my husband's attorney requested my financial information to present to the court. At first I protested, stating we had a pre-nup, my right to privacy, etc. I was told that I could be held in contempt of court if I did not comply. I was asked for my salary, value of my home, equity in my home, 401K balance and did I collect any child support for my minor child from my first marriage.

Both attorneys were called into a closed door meeting with a Probation Officer (we were not given, nor later able to obtain the Probation Officer's name) and we were not allowed to attend this meeting. When the meeting was over, my husband's attorney said the Probation Officer proposed a new figure of alimony for the ex-wife of \$26,000 per year. We were told that we had 10 minutes to discuss this proposed settlement or go before the judge.

The Probation Officer literally stood about 8 feet away, urging us to hurry because "the judge was not in a good mood". Our Attorney advised us that it was possible for the judge to leave the previous order of \$39,000 in place and that the \$26,000 might be a good deal. He clearly stated that "the Judge can do what he wants and he is not in a good mood" my husband signed the agreement.

We were dumbfounded. With her earned salary of \$32,000 per year and our alimony payment of \$26,000. per year she would enjoy an annual income of \$60,000. The courts previously determined that she needed \$39,000 a year to maintain a lifestyle similar to the lifestyle of the marriage. She was now able to earn \$32,000 of her own accord, we wanted to know why the alimony was not lowered to \$7,000 annually.

The explanation we received was that my husband now had an elevated lifestyle and because of my income, he had more free income to pay alimony. It did not matter that the ex-wife was financially able to support herself.

We were told she was entitled to the same lifestyle as ours and we needed to provide her with it.

Our attempt at modification cost us \$12,000 in legal fees, we have been told that any appeal or further action would cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000 minimum, which makes taking such steps financial prohibitive.

38. The end of a ten-year long marriage between people in their 40s, with no children, requires ex-husband to work 1.25 jobs to pay lifetime alimony to women who was independent for 25 years of her working life. (Testimony 1/24/08)

I am a 58-year-old truck driver who has been divorced for nearly three years, and I am currently serving a life sentence for this crime. I have been ordered by the probate court to pay support alimony to my ex-spouse, for the rest of my natural life, after a marriage that lasted only ten years.

My marriage was non-traditional and atypical but the court did not recognize that distinction. My ex-spouse and I were both in our forties when we married. Children were neither contemplated nor even biologically possible, and the marriage was largely one of convenience.

When we first met I was already working at the same job I hold today. We became best friends and developed an on-again off-again dating relationship that lasted several years. In 1990 when she ran into financial difficulties and was in danger of losing her home, I offered to move in with her so that by sharing expenses foreclosure could be avoided. Four years later she developed costly health problems but had no health insurance. In order to place her under my job-provided health plan we discussed and agreed to marriage as a solution. This worked well for only the first few years and after just five years our marriage was beyond repair. From that point on we lived as roommates. I did my own shopping, laundry, food preparation and chores.

After 9 1/2 years of marriage my ex-spouse planned for divorce but on the advice of counsel put off filing for an additional six months, until the ten-year mark, when the probate court would consider our marriage to have moved into the "long term" category. I was served with papers one week after that tenth anniversary.

In our divorce trial the marital assets were divided equitably. She got to keep the house and I got to keep my own pension, along with our hefty five-figure credit card debt. The court then ordered me to make weekly alimony payments that are approximately 25% of my take-home pay. I must work 1.25 days a week, every week, to meet that obligation, to a person to whom I am not related, a person to whom I owe no debt, a person to whom I no longer even speak, for the rest of my natural life.

Three years after the divorce my ex-spouse continues to enjoy a single-family house and a weekly support check from me and I can only afford a small apartment while struggling to keep up with the alimony and making the minimum monthly payments on the old credit card debt. Within two years I will qualify for retirement but will not be able to afford retirement at that time due to these lingering burdens.

39. Man grossing \$54,000 working for town government pays lifetime alimony of \$12,000 to woman who works full-time. She intends to return to court when he remarries; his new wife makes \$13,000.

I married a woman in 1986 who had two young children, 6 months old son, 4 year old daughter, from her previous marriage. When we talked of marriage, I wanted to at least have one child of my own, so along came my son. I thought we were a happily married couple with a wonderful family. In 2004 my wife basically abandoned the marriage and had an affair with another man she had met at work. Our bills were not getting paid and she spent \$3,000.00 on a motorcycle for him because he couldn't get a driver's license in Massachusetts. When I found out she was seeing another man she said, "I can see whomever I want, it's my right." I didn't totally disagree that it was her right, however, it was a limit in a marital relationship for me. She would leave my bed at odd hours of the night while I was sleeping and I would wake up alone. I ask her to make a choice come back to our marriage or I would have no choice but to end the marriage. I was in marriage counseling that she refused to attend. I then filed for divorce.

When our court date came up, my attorney said, "You will pay little or no alimony because she had a previous marriage and two children when you met her." In court I gave her everything in the house except the kitchen table my clothes and tools I use at work and a car. She asked the judge for \$1,000.00 a month for alimony. I then asked the court to consider the fact that she had an affair. The judge said that didn't matter. I asked the court to consider the fact that she had two children one from a previous marriage and one child from a boyfriend whose father was paying no child support. Judge said it didn't matter. The judge then made us go into a conference room to determine the amount of alimony and my ex-wife stuck to \$1,000.00 a month. I only make \$54,000.00 per year in income she made \$28,000.00 per year I couldn't accept this back into court we went. The judge said, "\$700.00 plus health insurance a month, and turned to me and said, "This is the best you're going to get Mr. Moore, I'd advise you and your attorney to take this offer.

I asked the judge to put a time limit on the alimony she said, "It is unconstitutional for me to set a time limit on the duration of alimony and it will be until she gets remarried or dies." She was 43 and I was 41.

I was threatened so many times during this hearing and told that if I didn't pay the alimony, the judge would revoke my electrical license, driver's license, and jail me. I was also told, "Don't try and get a job that pays less money or I will still consider the higher amount for alimony." I just wanted to get out of court with my freedom intact.

The other problem with lifetime alimony is the liability of the ex-spouse becoming for what ever reason disabled or unemployed after the marriage has ended. While the recipient has absolutely no liability for the payer's health, debt or life circumstances, the payer has this liability forever. This hangs over my head every day.

Massachusetts has become a no-fault divorce state, and has replaced State aid with the income of men and women through alimony. I thought there were equal protections under the law. Why don't they apply in divorce?

I have now had my future stolen from me legally; I will never be a homeowner again unless my ex-wife decides to free me of this unjust debt.

I was remarried in 2008 and my ex-wife said she is taking me back to court. She said, "Good, now you make more money with your wife's income, you can pay more alimony, and I need to stay on your health insurance."

40. Second wife who works as secretary must pay alimony to first wife who works full-time and receives benefits.

My name is _____ and I am paying alimony to my husband's ex wife because she made a choice that allowed her to be a burden to me.

I would like to speak about choices. We all make choices in our life, some are good and some, well, if we had it to do over, we would have made a different choice. Marriage is a choice we make and sometimes, for whatever reason, it just doesn't work out. When we make the choice to end a marriage we do so with the intention of going forward with our lives in a more positive way. Unfortunately, most of the time the decision to dissolve the marriage and the ensuing discussion of division of assets and children are typically acrimonious in nature. To add to the mix is the provision for alimony which is usually requested by the former wife, who is advised by her attorney that it is her "right" to receive alimony. A "right" that if she so chooses, keeps her former husband firmly in her grasp for her financial security for the rest of her or his life.

My husband was divorced from his former wife in January 2000 after a 25-year, and often tumultuous marriage. His ex wife was the one who left the family home and requested the divorce, knowing that, with the sanction of the State of Massachusetts, my husband would still be financially responsible for her. After the division of assets, which were equitable to both parties, alimony was left open as a "just in case" clause to benefit the former wife. She did not receive alimony initially because she had a very good paying job and with the settlement she received did not have a need for it.

We were married in 2002 and in 2003, my husband's ex wife, was fired from her job due to her own actions. This was supported by a hearing with her employer and the union that represented her. She decided that the trump card the State of Massachusetts so generously provided for her could be used. Again, she had a choice of being responsible with her employment and being financially responsible for herself or forcing us to be her financial support. After numerous threats that she would file for alimony if we did not heed her demands for money, regardless of our financial situation, she filed for alimony and subsequently was awarded a weekly sum of \$250 per week until the death of either party or the remarriage of the former wife.

Here again, she made the choice that would adversely affect our lives.

I made a choice too. I was divorced in 1997 after a 23-year marriage. My former husband lost his job and had been injured. We lost our home and any assets we had acquired because my pay alone could not support our family. I was told that I could receive alimony but my choice was to stand proud and go forward with my life. I was making \$8.00 an hour at the time. It was a struggle but I am proud to say that I made it without being a burden to anyone.

The provision for alimony has a detrimental effect for both parties. For the obligor, it puts him in a financial hell from which most do not recover from. Many have gone bankrupt or nearly so because of the financial constraints put upon them by meeting their own financial obligations and the alimony support to the former wife. For us, \$250 a week was a huge chunk that altered our lives and lifestyle and caused considerable tension and frustration for us.

For the spouse who receives the alimony, it retards the motivation to better themselves and to become a productive member of society. If you were to receive \$250 a week for life, knowing too, that you can appeal to the court for an increase at anytime, but knowing that this windfall would end should you remarry, would you? No. Why lose that income when you can cohabitate with someone and your former spouse is contributing to you and whomever you choose to reside with.

In December, my husband was laid off. Our income dropped even lower and we were advised to file for emergency modification. The result of this hearing was that her financial statement showed a marked increase in her income since the alimony was granted.

One would think that the alimony should be discontinued since it proved she is more than capable of providing for herself without assistance from anyone else. This was not to be the case, she was still awarded \$100 a week for life and wanted to be able to make this only temporary so she could increase the alimony after my husband returned to work, even though it was clear that her earning capacity showed she could, in fact, take care of herself. At this time it was decided that I would pay her the \$100 after I was paid. Can you imagine working to support your spouse's ex? This is why I am paying alimony to my husband's ex wife.

Massachusetts does not recognize common-law marriage. Should the partners have merely lived together, alimony would not have been a consideration. Child support, if there were children, would be provided until the child reaches majority age. Why then, are we forcing one individual into involuntary servitude for a grown adult who is more than capable of taking care of herself? If alimony is not an option except for extreme circumstances, then there would be no expectation of one party to be supported by the other party and they would be forced to be financially responsible, thus setting a good example to their children and society in general. Also, communications would generally be better between the parties and the animosity that is so prevalent in these circumstances would doubtless lessen.

Right now we see a decline in marriage in general, doubtless this is the effect of divorces gone very sour and fueled by the fear of being someone else's cash cow.

UPDATE: The husband is now afflicted with lung cancer and undergoing the full range of treatments. After another return to divorce court, his alimony obligation was temporarily lifted. His case will be reviewed again when he is forced to return to court in February 2009.

41. 47-years-old at time of divorce. Ex-wife now works full-time but collects \$1000 a month in alimony.

I was married in 1983. I was 28 years old. My ex was the 29. We separated in 2000. The divorce was final in 2002.

My ex was a high school graduate, with no intentions of bettering herself. In the early days of the marriage, I worked two jobs, she would work part time jobs on occasion.

In 1995 I filed for divorce based on her infidelity. Based on the age of my two children at the time, I stayed in the home. I realized I didn't want to live in a loveless marriage and moved out in 2000. My ex filed for divorce in Feb 2001 and divorce was final in Oct 2002. I have been remarried since 4/4/03.

My ex got the house, I got to keep my 401k and pension, which at the time wasn't very much. Although my ex got the house, I was also ordered to pay 1600.00 per month. That figure was based on my ex's request, not based on a mathematical formula. \$600.00 of the \$1600 was child support and the 1k was alimony.

I no longer pay child support (kids are emancipated) married with children of their own. I do continue to pay alimony at 1,050.00 per month.

At this time my ex has been working pretty much full time for the last 2 years. The home we lived in during the marriage is now up for sale. I'd say there is at least 100k in equity.

Although we were officially married for 19 years, we were 47 at the time of divorce. My divorce states alimony can be modified based on substantial change in circumstance. I'm hoping the sale of the house is a positive change for me.

Other than that, I am on the hook until she marries or dies. I think the latter has a better chance of occurring.

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