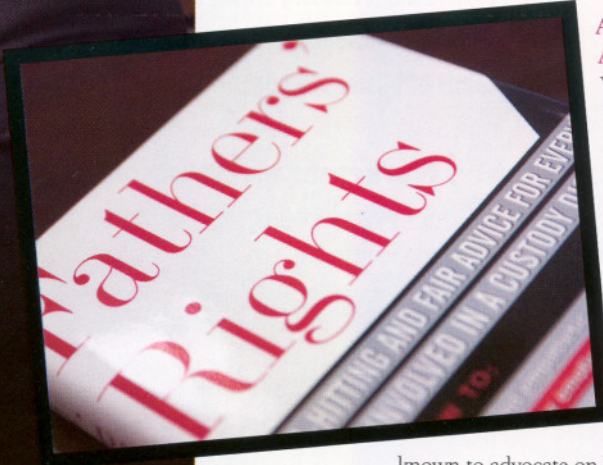




are able to maintain strong relationships with their fathers. To achieve that mission, Leving has built a firm that's uniquely equipped to meet the needs of fathers. And he's also taken on a leading role in advocating for fathers' rights and paternal involvement. "I have a passion for this area of law," he explains. "Research clearly shows that we must restore fatherhood in our society in order to help our children and our future as a nation, yet our legal system often makes that task virtually impossible."



A LEADING ATTORNEY

You might say that Leving's firm specializes in the virtually impossible, often taking cases that other attorneys reject or find themselves unable to handle. As the only firm in the country that is

known to advocate on behalf of fathers' rights, Leving and his highly skilled veteran litigators handle local, national and international cases. Their clients include mega-star rapper Twista and former U.S. Congressman Mel Reynolds. Leving strategically helped reunite Elian Gonzalez with his father in Cuba. This custody battle played out before a worldwide audience. Leving recently assisted a father in recovering his child

from the Czech Republic and is now helping a U.S. custodial father to recover his children from Egypt.

Fathers' rights

The Law Offices of Jeffrey M. Leving, Ltd. is fighting for fathers and children.

BY KIRSTEN ORR

FATHERS HAVE RIGHTS, TOO. Yet all too often, they're ignored by the courts, underserved by lawyers and unmet by divorce and child custody arrangements. And, sadly, those who suffer most as a result are usually the children. That's why Chicago attorney Jeffrey Leving concentrates his law practice in helping fathers navigate through divorce and custody proceedings. It's not an easy task, but Leving sees it as a mission that's vital to protecting the future of our society by ensuring that children

rights of fathers is an uphill battle in a legal system that often regards them as second-class parents. "We see terrible gender bias against fathers every day," Leving says. "This significantly impairs their ability to help their children achieve their dreams." While the bias against fathers makes this a difficult area of the law, Leving isn't deterred by the challenges his clients face. To the contrary, he's created a firm specifically designed to overcome them. "Ten years ago, fathers routinely walked away from custody battles because they didn't think they could win," he notes. "But we're proving that the obstacles of gender bias, judicial inconsistency and public apathy are not insurmountable."

To face these obstacles, Leving put together a dedicated



THE KNOWLEDGEABLE TEAM OF THE LAW OFFICES OF JEFFERY M. LEVING, LTD. DEFENDS FATHERS' RIGHTS DURING PRE- AND POST-DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS AS WELL AS CUSTODY AND PATERNITY CASES.



team of highly experienced lawyers, recruiting top litigators and training them himself. "Our standards are high here because our cases can't be handled out of a standard playbook," he notes. "Our cases require extensive preparation, strategic planning and the ability to think outside the box. This is not assembly-line legal work, so I recruit and retain only the best, most aggressive attorneys."

Leving also has full-time licensed private detectives; a doctoral level clinical psychologist; a certified public accountant; and attorneys having extensive military experience and knowledge on staff. Having these resources in-house helps him give his clients a valuable competitive edge, he says. "I don't know of any other firms that keep detectives on staff, but I do it because it ensures that my detectives work only for my clients, which eliminates the conflicts of interest that can easily happen often in the legal system," he explains. "Since our psychologist is also an attorney, she is the best possible person to help prepare our cases and our clients for cross-examinations and custody evaluations while ensuring confidentiality under the attorney-client privilege."

With these unique capabilities, Leving is often able to win cases that would otherwise be considered hopeless. "For many of my cases, I'm the second, third or even fourth attorney," he says. "This is a very difficult area of the law and many attorneys won't take the difficult cases or devote the necessary time and thought to win them. But when we take them on, I never forget that often the future and safety of a child hangs in the balance. That's a substantial responsibility and we take it very seriously."

A LEADING ADVOCATE

His concern for the welfare of children has led Leving into an increasingly high profile advocacy role on both the state and national level. In 1986, he co-authored the Illinois Joint Custody Law, which has given many fathers more access to their children. Gov. Rod Blagojevich also appointed him chair of the Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood, where his goal is to significantly increase the number of children growing up with an involved and committed father. "Twenty-four million children in the United States live absent their biological father, and the ramifications of that are tremendous," he says. "Those children are more likely to be raped, sexually abused, undereducated, involved in crime and living in poverty. We must restore fatherhood as a societal norm for the sake of our children and our country."

Leving's message is finding a national platform, with both former Vice President Al Gore and President George W. Bush speaking out on the issue. Leving's own efforts have earned him the coveted Award of Merit from the National Center For Missing and Exploited Children, an award few lawyers in America ever receive. Yet, Leving is clear that his commitment to improving children's lives by giving them access to their fathers is more than a political or even professional decision. It's personal. "This is more than a job for me," he says. "I think it's the most important issue we face as a country, and I never forget that what we do directly impacts the lives of children. That's why we work as hard as we do. I don't think we can afford to ignore, overlook or underserve the needs of our clients and their children." ❖



AT A GLANCE

COMPANY NAME

▼ The Law Offices of Jeffery M. Leving, Ltd.

TYPE OF BUSINESS

▼ The only firm in the country to concentrate in defending fathers' rights during pre- and post-divorce proceedings, custody and paternity cases.

LOCATION

▼ 19 S. LaSalle
Chicago, IL 60603

EMPLOYEES

▼ 20 attorneys;
49 total employees

NO. OF ACTIVE CASES:

▼ 700

KEYS TO SUCCESS

▼ The firm is equipped to provide legal services at the highest possible level thanks to highly skilled attorneys, who advocate on behalf of fathers; in-house investigators and a doctoral level psychologist and a commitment to handcrafting a unique strategy that meets the individual needs of each client and their children.

CONTACT

▼ (312) 807-3990
www.dadsrights.com

LEARN MORE ABOUT LEVING

Check out these additional resources for more information about Leving's practice, advocacy and expertise in the area of fathers' rights:

1. **Read the book** – Leving's book, *Fathers' Rights*, explores how any man involved in negotiating for the right to see and help raise his children can effectively deal with divorce settlements and legal custody battles. An excerpt:

"Until truth, justice, compassion and common sense prevail more broadly and more consistently, a father facing exclusion from his children's lives must plan carefully, negotiate skillfully, and fight fiercely to assert and preserve natural rights and constitutionally guaranteed freedoms that most Americans take for granted." (page 206)

2. **Watch the show** – Leving hosts Chicago Counterpoint on CAN-TV (Cable Channel 21). He has a variety of guests and listeners may call in their questions during the show, which airs on Thursdays at 8 p.m. in Chicago.