

Child care is personal matter for councilman

In the last half of the 20th century, as women entered the workplace in droves, child care became an increasingly important political issue.

For Kansas City, Mo., city councilmember Troy Nash, it has become a very personal one.

Nash and his wife, Sherrie, have to juggle taking care of their 15-week-old daughter, Arielle. Sherrie attends law school. Troy's job at City Hall comes with a greater amount of flexibility.

"This job doesn't come with instructions. Politics will take as much time as you give it," he said. "I happen to be one of those 'type A' people. I give it an awful lot of time, energy, and effort, but at the same time I am determined to balance those needs with my daughter."

Nash was raised in a single-parent home. He said he greatly admires the

"wonderful job" his mother did in raising him, but he also sees the importance a father holds in a child's life. He expects to be a big part of his daughter's life.

"I think that fathers, particularly, have a role to play — a very active role. It seems to me that leading by example is the best way to do that," he said. That is how the solution that he and his wife worked out over the dinner table grew into a few phone calls to the city's legal department, to see if it could be done.

"There were certain things that I did run by our legal department, as it relates to telecommuting and things like that," said Nash, who either brings his daughter to his office or brings his office home. "We'll see how it works this semester."

Nash's family-friendly attitude toward his personal situation might result in City Hall addressing child care

concerns for other workers in city government. In particular, there have been early discussions of a daycare facility. Other solutions, like telecommuting, are also being proposed. Still, Nash understands that his situation is, at best, a test case.

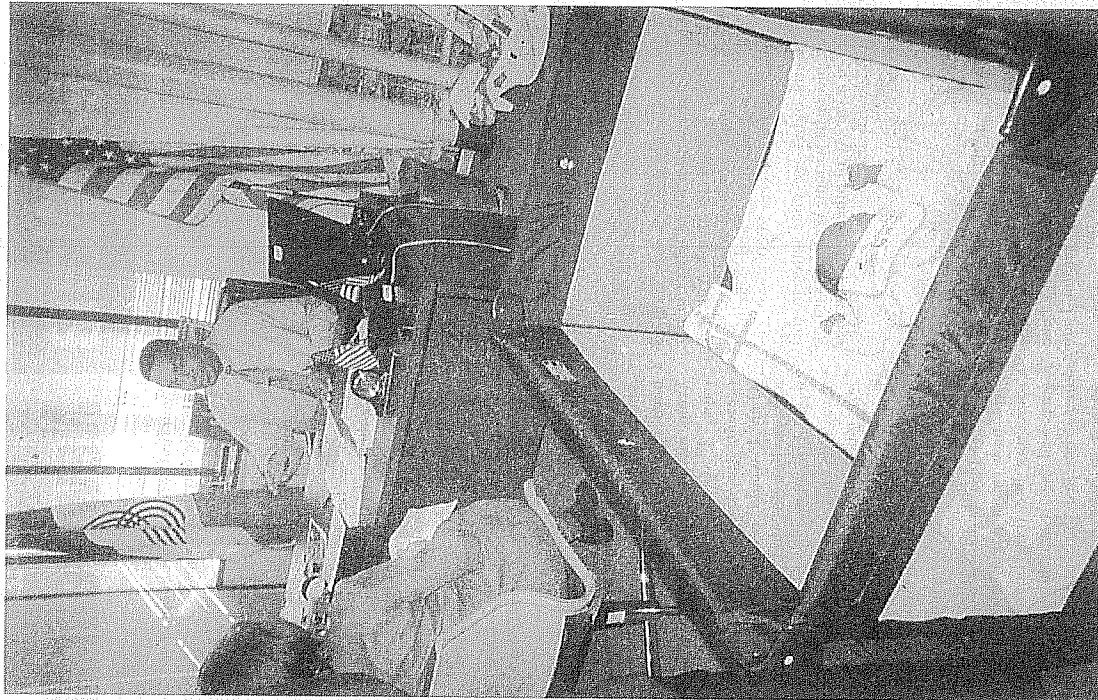
"I think it's too early to suggest that 40-hour-a-week child care inside City Hall would be the type of program that I would advocate," he said. "I think that we learn from this experience here, and ultimately come up with something, but it's going to take an awful lot of discussion before we come to those types of conclusions," he said.

"My situation is a little different, because I'm afforded the opportunity to have her in the office," he added. "I think, ultimately, when we do something on a broader scale we would have the appropriate child care facility in place to deal with it."

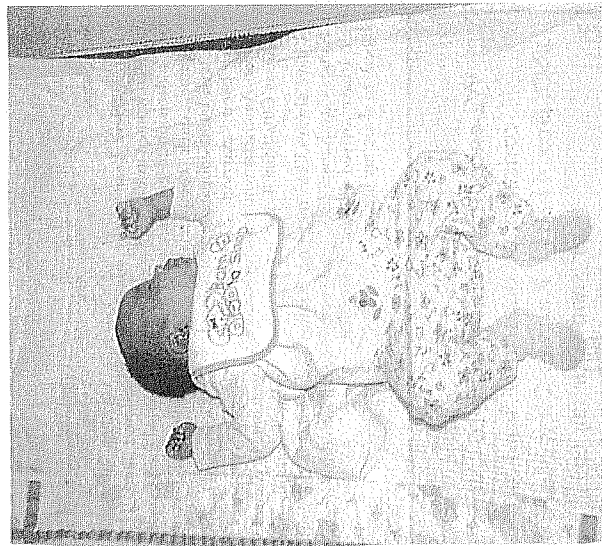
Councilmember Becky Nace told Kansas City Hispanic News that she admires Nash's progressive attitude on the issue.

"I am proud of Troy for doing this and (for) wanting to be an equal partner in the raising of his daughter," she said, adding that she understands that his solution is a special case, but that she hopes that more can come of it.

"I don't think it would work in every situation. The space, the job responsibilities, would not permit them the flexibility to do the same thing that Troy is doing, but I think it does raise our consciousness that we do need to be flexible. All employers need to be as flexible as possible without interrupting the business of the day," she said, adding that "it may not work for everyone here, but I think it does speak to the need for possibly daycare facilities in City Hall, as many other businesses have done."



Taking his new child to work attracted media attention for councilmember Troy Nash. His daughter, Arielle, slept through all the commotion.



15-week-old Arielle sleeps in her father's office as he conducts city business. Troy Nash says this child care solution is unique, but may prompt broader discussion on the issue that affects other city workers.