

Chronology of the Kennedy Legal Services Amendment

- May 7, 1996: Mariella Batista shot by her abuser in front of the Riverside, California courthouse she was about to enter for a custody hearing.
- May 15, 1996: Senator Kennedy raised Batista case with Attorney General Janet Reno at a Judiciary Committee hearing entitled, "Combatting Violence Against Women". Reno agreed that depriving people of access to safety programs only makes problems worse.
- June 26, 1996: Senator Kennedy introduced an amendment in the Labor Committee markup of the Legal Services Authorization bill to allow agencies which receive Legal Services Corporation funds to use their non-federal funds to represent battered immigrants regardless of their immigration status. As no quorum was present, the Labor Committee never voted on the amendment.

The original amendment was inadvertently limited to battered spouses and children. It should have applied to any relationship covered under state domestic violence laws (e.g., parent-child; husband-wife; common law spouse-common law spouse, boyfriend-girlfriend, etc.). The new amendment language was changed & re-circulated.

- July: The original version of the Kennedy amendment (covering spouses and children only) was added in a manager's amendment to the Commerce/Justice/State (CJS) Appropriations bill by the House Appropriations Committee. The Senate Approp's Committee adopted the same language in their CJS manager's package.
- September: Senator Domenici and the majority CJS subcommittee staff agreed to a technical correction to the CJS language to ensure that the provisions also covered any relationship which was eligible to receive a protection order under state domestic violence laws.