



Bridge to Justice

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CO Supreme Court Decision Sets Precedent in Favor of Victims of Domestic Abuse

In response to a brief filed by six local attorneys and nonprofits, a landmark ruling by the Colorado Supreme Court on May 21, 2018 strengthens protection for domestic violence victims who flee their abusers in other states and come to Colorado. Colorado victim and child advocates hailed the decision as critical support for Colorado's Civil Protection Order process which allows victims to obtain restraining orders against abusers and makes violation of such orders a criminal offense.

The Court unanimously determined that Colorado law, and the due process provisions of the U.S. and Colorado Constitutions, allow Colorado courts to enter protection (restraining) orders against out-of-state abusers who continue to threaten their former partners in Colorado using emails, telephone, text, Skype and other electronic communications. In *Parocha v. Parocha*, the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that a non-resident abuser's harassment, threats, or coercion was sufficient to subject the abuser to Colorado's jurisdiction, rejecting arguments that due process prevented Colorado courts from establishing jurisdiction and issuing a restraining order against an abuser in another state.

Megan Parocha obtained a Temporary Civil Protection Order from the Boulder County Court in December 2016 and then sought the assistance of attorney Bruce Wiener, Executive Director and founder of Bridge to Justice, a non-profit agency helping low and moderate-income clients with civil legal issues.

Although attorney Wiener initially succeeded in obtaining a Permanent Protection Order, the Order later was reversed by the Boulder District Court despite the threat she was under because it determined that the County Court had no jurisdiction to enter a protection order against Ms. Parocha's non-resident husband who was living in New Jersey. Bridge to Justice continued to represent Ms. Parocha and requested the Colorado Supreme Court to hear her appeal and reinstate her protection order. "I would never have been able to appeal and continue the quest for safety for myself and child without assistance from Bridge to Justice," stated Ms. Parocha.

Six nonprofit agencies filed amicus curiae (friend of the court) briefs in support of Bridge to Justice's legal arguments, including Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Safe Shelter of Saint Vrain Valley, Rocky Mountain Victim Law Center, Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center, Project Safeguard, Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence.

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Bridge to Justice was founded in 2013 and advises and represents clients living in the Front Range with civil cases at a significantly reduced rate.