

2026 POWER Act Program Outline

I. Judge Tigar Brief Intro (10 minutes max)

Describe purpose of POWER Act, introduce panelists; tell personal story of helping DV victim

II. Lizeth Castillo (25 minutes)

How you got into DV work

What is Peace Over Violence?

Domestic violence basic concepts – training

How DV is defined

Effects on victim, effects on children

Statistics re prevalence of DV

III. Lizeth and Jennafer (7 minutes)

Current trends in DV

Increased barriers to protection via the legal system (Lizeth)

- Bill seeking increased sentences for DV abusers rejected
- Victims arrested more often

Litigation Abuse (Jennafer)

- Abusers more adept – they’re the ones calling police or child welfare – especially if there are immigration implications, language barriers or disabilities including traumatic brain injury that is a frequent result of strangulation in abusive relationships
- Mutual and retaliatory restraining order requests
- “Paper” or litigation abuse – multiple frequent filings, often withdrawn, that cause survivors to expend all their mental and emotional as well as financial resources responding instead of parenting, working, healing
- A good pro bono attorney can be the difference between litigation abuse crushing someone into submission or being able to stay safe

Differences in economic resources (Jennafer)

- Most survivors are self-represented
- A good pro bono attorney can help prevent unnecessary and traumatic continuances, difficulties in admitting evidence, help getting relevant testimony on the record in addition to pointing out the law to judges who are often hearing and deciding scores of DVRO requests in a single day

ICE enforcement is higher (Lizeth)

- Rapid response networks
- Removal defense

IV. Dia Omasonte (20 minutes)

How you got into DV work

Opportunities for DV pro bono

No prior experience or training required

Pro bono is not just for DV restraining orders—also help with benefits, custody, child support, immigration (VAWA), victim support in cases involving criminal prosecution

Slides on immigration protection

VAWA cancellation—only works when someone is in removal proceedings—Lizeth has opportunities

Pro bono partners can help

Big firm lawyers are well suited to pro bono

One example of where pro bono made a difference in the life of a DV victim

V. Jennafer Wagner (20 minutes)

How you got into DV work

What is FVAP?

Opportunities for appellate DV pro bono

One example of where pro bono made a difference in the life of a DV victim

[Jennafer and Lizeth to tag team]

VI. Questions (8 minutes)