

NO. 75061-01

IN THE SUPREME COURT  
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

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In Re the Marriage of

DAWUD A. MUHAMMAD  
Respondent,

and

CHERRY GILBERT  
f/k/a CHERRY MUHAMMAD

Petitioner.

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FROM THE SUPERIOR COURT  
STATE OF WASHINGTON FOR PIERCE COUNTY

The Honorable Bruce Cohoe, Judge

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*AMICUS* MEMORANDUM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL  
EMPOWERMENT AND APPEALS PROJECT, *et al.*,

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION.....1

FACTUAL BACKGROUND.....2

ARGUMENT.....4

I. THE TRIAL COURT’S DECISION HOLDING MS. GILBERT RESPONSIBLE FOR MUHAMMAD’S UNEMPLOYMENT WAS BASED ON A FLAGRANT LEGAL ERROR AND WAS FACTUALLY UNSUPPORTED.....4

II. THE TRIAL COURT’S DECISION UNDERMINES THE UNIVERSAL PUBLIC POLICY OF PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOMICIDE.....5

    A. The Decision Trivializes the Critical Importance of Removing Guns from Violent Abusers to Prevent Homicides.....8

    B. The Decision Undermines the Public Interest in Identifying and Restraining Abusively Violent Police Officers.....10

CONCLUSION.....12

APPENDIX.....A-1

## TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

### CASES

<u>Barnett v. Barnett</u> , 945 P.2d 870 (Kan. App. 1997).....	6
<u>Bernethy v. Walt Failor's, Inc.</u> , 97 Wash.2d 929, 653 P.2d 280 (Wash. 1982).....	9
<u>Bird v. Henke</u> , 65 Wash.2d 79, 395 P.2d 751 (Wash. 1964).....	8
<u>Bowling v. Brandenburg</u> , 37 S.W.3d 785 (Ky. App. 2000).....	6
<u>Brooks-Gall v. Gall</u> , 840 A.2d 993 (Pa. Super. Ct. 2003).....	6
<u>Campbell v. Campbell</u> , 604 A.2d 33 (Me. 1992).....	7
<u>Czup v. Czup</u> , 1999 WL 744034 (Ohio App. 1999) .....	6
<u>In re Marriage of Mason</u> , 40 Wash. App. 450, 698 P.2d 1104 (Wash. App. 1985).....	8
<u>In re Marriage of Tower</u> , 55 Wash. App. 697, 780 P.2d 863 (Wash. App. 1989).....	8
<u>In re Matter of Disciplinary Proceedings against Honorable Ralph Turco</u> , 137 Wash.2d 227, 970 P.2d 731 (Wash. 1999).....	7
<u>In re V.C. v. H.C., Sr.</u> , 689 N.Y.S.2d 447 (N.Y. Sup. 1999).....	6
<u>Planned Parenthood v. Casey</u> , 505 U.S. 833 (1992).....	9
<u>Roofeh v. Roofeh</u> , 525 N.Y.S.2d 765 (N.Y. Sup. 1988).....	7
<u>State v. Ward</u> , 148 Wash.2d 803, 64 P.3d 640 (Wash. 2003).....	7
<u>Uttaro v. Uttaro</u> , 768 N.E.2d 600 (Mass. App. 2002).....	6
<u>Wildoner v. Borough of Ramsey</u> , 744 A.2d 1146 (N.J. 2000).....	6

## **STATUTES**

18 U.S.C. § 925(a)(1).....	4
18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8) .....	4, 8
Revised Code Washington § 9.41.040.....	8
Revised Code Washington § 9.41.80.....	5
Revised Code Washington § 10.99.010.....	7
Revised Code Washington § 26.50.....	5

## **LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

139 Cong. Rec. S16293 (daily ed. Nov. 19, 1993).....	8
142 Cong. Rec. S9458 (daily ed. Aug. 2, 1996).....	9

## **OTHER**

Campbell, Jacquelyn C., “Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide,” <i>National Institute of Justice Journal</i> , Nov. 2003, Issue No. 250.....	9
Florida Governor’s Task Force on Domestic and Sexual Violence, Florida Mortality Review Project Report (1997).....	9
Greenfeld, Lawrence A., “Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current of Former Spouses, Boyfriends and Girlfriends,” Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998).....	10
“Homicide Trends in the U.S.: Intimate Homicide,” U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (2002).....	10
Johnson, Leonor, “On the Front Lines: Police Stress and Family Well-Being,” Testimony for the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families (1991).....	11
Kellerman, Arthur L., <i>et al.</i> , “Gun Ownership as a Risk Factor for Homicide in the Home,” <i>New Eng. J. Med.</i> 1084(1992).....	10
Lininger, Tom, “A Better Way to Disarm Batters,” <i>54 Hastings L.J.</i> 525 (March 2003).....	12
Neidig, P.H., Russell, H.E., and Seng, A.F., “Interspousal Aggression In Law Enforcement Families: A Preliminary Investigation,” <i>Police Studies</i> , Volume 15, No. 1 (1992).....	11
Sheehan, Donald C., “Domestic Violence by Police Officers,” U.S. Dept. of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Behavioral Science Unit (2000).....	11

## INTRODUCTION

The Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project and *amici* hereby adopt and resubmit our initial *amicus* motion in support of Cherry Gilbert's Petition for Review (below), initially filed on March 12, 2004, and strongly reiterate our deep conviction that the Court of Appeals' ruling below was not only factually and legally in error, but represents a grave threat to victims of domestic violence everywhere who depend on protective orders to safeguard them from abusive and violent partners. If this Court upholds the appellate ruling below, it will represent a breathtaking shift in this Court's emphasis on encouraging women to seek and obtain protective orders, and will undermine decades of compelling public policies at both the state and federal level designed to encourage victims to seek legal protection from violent abusers and to prevent homicide. Thus, *amici* resubmit our initial *amicus* brief to urge this Court to overturn the unjust and illogical appellate ruling below.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to DV LEAP, *amici* include the Domestic Violence Report, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, Stop Family Violence, STOPDV, Women's Law Project, Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline, Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Ohio Domestic Violence Network, Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Women Empowered Against Violence, Ayuda's Clinica Legal Latina, Camden Domestic Violence Clinic and Project, Center for Battered

The trial court’s decision unlawfully penalizes Ms. Gilbert — the victim of her husband Muhammad’s gun-wielding domestic abuse — for seeking much-needed legal protection. By holding Ms. Gilbert responsible for Muhammad’s unemployment, and denying her any share of his pension because she sought a protection order against him, the trial court’s decision is both legally unfounded and incompatible with the compelling public policy favoring prevention of domestic violence and homicides.

### **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

On April 3, 2001, Dawud Muhammad, while intoxicated, threatened his wife Cherry Gilbert with a loaded gun, and pointed the gun at her sister, saying “I’m gonna blow your brains out.”<sup>2</sup> The next day Pierce County officials arrested and charged Muhammad with multiple counts of domestic violence and removed from his possession his shotgun and multiple handguns. See Report of Proceedings (RP) at 57-64.

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Women's Legal Services, Center for Community Solutions, Domestic Violence Civil Legal Services, Inc., Family Law/Domestic Violence Project, John Jay Legal Services, Inc., Pace University School of Law, and Will County Legal Assistance Program, Inc, Women Against Abuse, Inc. Statements of Interest are set forth herein at Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> See Clerk’s Papers (CP) at 69. Muhammad’s first wife, Jennifer, has also declared that she experienced similar behavior: “While we were married, Muhammad put a loaded gun to my head and threatened to shoot me.” Id. at 92; Decl. of Jennifer B. Muhammad (Oct. 2, 2000).

In May 2001, Ms. Gilbert sought a protection order against Muhammad. After a four-day contested trial involving several witnesses, Judge Sergio Armijo entered a protection order against Muhammad, stating “he needs help,” and ordered Muhammad to undergo alcohol, drug, psychological, and domestic violence evaluations. RP (DV) at 6-7. Judge Armijo, exercising his discretion, prohibited Muhammad from possessing any guns and denied his request for an exemption from that ruling. Id. at 7.

In the subsequent dissolution proceeding in 2002, Judge Bruce Cohoe explicitly denied Ms. Gilbert any part of Muhammad’s police pension:

By [Ms. Gilbert] obtaining a permanent domestic violence protection order against [Muhammad], [he] no longer has the ability under Federal Law to own or use a weapon. . . . The ability to own and use a weapon is a condition of his employment through the King County Sheriff’s Office or any other law enforcement agency . . . [Ms. Gilbert] knew, and has known for some considerable period of time, that by seeking and making the protection order permanent she would effectively terminate her husband’s ability to work.

CP at 17.

## ARGUMENT

### **I. THE TRIAL COURT’S DECISION HOLDING MS. GILBERT RESPONSIBLE FOR MUHAMMAD’S UNEMPLOYMENT WAS BASED ON A FLAGRANT LEGAL ERROR AND WAS FACTUALLY UNSUPPORTED.**

The trial court’s conclusion that federal law deprived Muhammad of his guns upon entry of a protection order was manifestly incorrect.

While the federal Gun Control Act does prohibit any person subject to a protection order from possessing a gun, the statute includes *an explicit exception for law enforcement officers*. See 18 U.S.C. § 925(a)(1).

Indeed, the Muhammad protection order at issue before Judge Cohoe in the dissolution hearing actually *quoted* this exception to federal law.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, the underlying legal basis for Judge Cohoe’s decision denying Ms. Gilbert any share of Muhammad’s police pension — that

“[Muhammad] no longer has the ability under Federal Law to own or use a weapon” and thus was purportedly unemployable — is a flagrant error of

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<sup>3</sup> “An exception [to the federal gun prohibition] exists for law enforcement officers and military personnel when carrying department/government-issued firearms.” Order of Protection (Nov. 16, 2001) at 3 (citing 18 U.S.C. §925(a)(1)). The Lautenberg Amendment to the federal Gun Control Law, 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8), which prohibits possession of a gun if a person has been convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence, also does not apply here, as Muhammad was acquitted of the one charge that went forward. See Tacoma Municipal Court Case No. D00016273 (jury acquittal on misdemeanor domestic violence charge dated 10-5-2001).



law.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the trial court's finding that Ms. Gilbert was responsible for Muhammad's unemployment was unfounded factually. The trial court's assumptions that a weapon was required for employment with any law enforcement agency, or that without a gun Muhammad is unable to work any job anywhere, are counter-intuitive and unfounded. More fundamentally, the key decisions — to remove Muhammad's guns and to terminate his employment with King County — were made independently by two separate institutions (the protection order court and King County as Muhammad's employer) in the exercise of their own discretion based upon Muhammad's conduct, and did not follow automatically when Ms. Gilbert sought a protection order.

## **II. THE TRIAL COURT'S DECISION UNDERMINES THE UNIVERSAL PUBLIC POLICY OF PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOMICIDE.**

The denial of a significant portion of marital property to a victim of domestic violence abuse, on the ground that her protection order caused her abuser to lose his job, sends an unmistakable and destructive message

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<sup>4</sup> Had Judge Cohoe understood this federal law, he should have recognized that the prohibition on guns was the reasoned decision of Judge Armijo after four days of trial regarding Muhammad's abusive conduct. Surely Ms. Gilbert cannot be held responsible for an independent judge's exercise of discretion under state law. See, e.g., RCW 26.50 and RCW 9.41.80.

to all domestic violence victims: *Protecting your life is likely to cost you your economic rights at divorce.* This ruling by the trial court, which has received extensive local and national publicity, is unconscionable, and can only have a powerful chilling effect on domestic violence victims everywhere.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the trial court's decision is profoundly out of step with courts across the country, which have consistently refused to issue rulings in domestic violence cases that would have a chilling effect on victims seeking protection orders. See, e.g., Brooks-Gall v. Gall, 840 A.2d 993, 999 (Pa. Super. Ct. 2003) ("If judges sua sponte place children in foster care after a [Protection from Abuse] hearing, it will have a chilling effect on victims of domestic violence seeking protective orders"); Uttaro v. Uttaro, 768 N.E.2d 600, 604 (Mass. App. 2002) ("allowing mutuality in restraining orders would chill the abuse prevention system, . . . placing the victim in fear of the consequences of strict (or lax) enforcement of prior orders"); Wildoner v. Borough of Ramsey, 744 A.2d 1146, 1158 (N.J. 2000) ("Such a chilling effect would not further the goals of the Domestic Violence Act. . . . A broad interpretation of the Act better conforms to the public policy against domestic violence and is in accordance with New Jersey's place in the forefront of states that have sought to curb domestic violence.") (citation omitted); Bowling v. Brandenburg, 37 S.W.3d 785, 788 (Ky. App. 2000) ("Releasing the tapes of 911 calls seeking police assistance, particularly in instances of domestic violence, would have a chilling effect on those who might otherwise seek assistance."); Czup v. Czup, 1999 WL 744034, \* 8 (Ohio App. 1999) ("If the complainant believes there is a possibility that . . . the trial court may award attorney fees in favor of the alleged perpetrator, the complainant might forego filing charges of domestic violence in the first instance. This would create a chilling effect on the filing of legitimate charges of domestic violence which is contrary to the public policy of this state."); In re V.C. v. H.C., Sr., 689 N.Y.S.2d 447, 452 (N.Y. Sup. 1999) ("Such a holding would reward the worst of abusers, . . . and would obviously frustrate the intent of the statutory scheme, which seeks to protect, not punish, the victims of domestic violence."); Barnett v. Barnett, 945 P.2d 870, 878 (Kan. App.

Likewise, the trial court’s decision is fundamentally at odds with this Court’s own commitment to according domestic violence victims the fullest protection of the law:

The Legislature has established a clear public policy with respect to the importance of societal sensitivity to domestic violence and its consequences. . . . “It is the intent of the legislature that *the official response to cases of domestic violence shall stress the enforcement of the laws to protect the victim and shall communicate the attitude that violent behavior is not excused or tolerated.*”

In the Matter of Disciplinary Proceedings against Honorable Turco, 137 Wash.2d 227, 253 n. 7, 970 P.2d 731 (Wash. 1999) (quoting RCW 10.99.010) (emphasis added); see also State v. Ward, 148 Wash.2d 803, 813, 64 P.3d 640 (Wash. 2003) (stressing “the legislature’s purpose of assuring victims of domestic violence the maximum protection from abuse”).

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1997) (“If we were to construe the [Protection from Abuse] Act as suggested by Charles, this would place a chilling effect upon the bringing of borderline cases to the attention of the court system. We decline to adopt that reasoning.”); Campbell v. Campbell, 604 A.2d 33, 37 (Me. 1992) (noting “the very real danger of chilling the legitimate resort to socially beneficial protection proceedings” and that “[t]he public interest would then be disserved if a spouse were discouraged from requesting a protection order by a fear that if the request is unsuccessful, a divorce court will automatically weigh the mere denial against that spouse in its award of parental rights and responsibilities.”); Roofeh v. Roofeh, 525 N.Y.S.2d 765, 768 (N.Y. Sup. 1988) (“Failure to do so may result in a chilling effect upon those who desperately need the order of protection . . .”).

**A. The Decision Trivializes the Critical Importance of Removing Guns from Violent Abusers to Prevent Homicides.**

The trial court’s decision directly contravenes the compelling public policy — embodied in both federal and Washington state law<sup>6</sup> — encouraging the removal of guns from dangerous domestic abusers as a means of preventing foreseeable homicides. As Senator Chafee (R-R.I.) emphasized in speaking about the federal protection order gun ban:

Restraining orders are issued for the express reason that a woman sincerely believes and a court agrees that she is in imminent danger of being harmed, attacked or killed. *It therefore is nothing short of insanity for Federal law to allow such dangerous persons to possess a gun.*

139 Cong. Rec. S16293 (daily ed. Nov. 19, 1993) (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup>

The same sentiment is reflected in the Lautenberg Amendment, 18 U.S.C.

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<sup>6</sup> Washington courts have long emphasized the public policy implications in marriage dissolution cases like this one. *See, e.g., Bird v. Henke*, 65 Wash.2d 79, 81, 395 P.2d 751 (Wash. 1964) (dissolution decrees must “hav[e] due regard for the liberal policy obtaining in this state in such matters”); *In re Marriage of Tower*, 55 Wash. App. 697, 704 n. 4, 780 P.2d 863 (Wash. App. 1989) (“requiring termination of a woman’s maintenance upon remarriage . . . is a harsh and unjust result that does not further sound public policy”); *In re Marriage of Mason*, 40 Wash. App. 450, 453, 698 P.2d 1104 (Wash. App. 1985) (decisions on permanent alimony “must rest upon the public policy underlying the award of alimony”).

<sup>7</sup> *But cf. supra* footnote 3 and related text, regarding federal exemption to gun ban for law enforcement officers.

§ 922(g)(8), and Washington Revised Code § 9.41.040, both of which prohibit convicted domestic abusers from possessing guns.<sup>8</sup>

These gun restrictions are logically impelled by what has long been known about domestic violence and guns: Domestic violence is often a prelude to homicide, and the majority of these homicides are committed with guns. Violence in families is disturbingly widespread. “[O]n an average day in the United States, nearly 11,000 women are severely assaulted by their male partners.” Planned Parenthood v. Casey, 505 U.S. 833, 891 (1992). In nearly 80 percent of all intimate partner homicides, the man physically abused the woman prior to murdering her.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, studies show that more than 65 percent of all intimate

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<sup>8</sup> See also Bernethy v. Walt Failor’s, Inc., 97 Wash.2d 929, 933, 653 P.2d 280 (Wash. 1982) (Washington’s statute prohibiting delivery of weapons to incompetent persons “reflects a strong public policy in our state that certain people should not be provided with dangerous weapons.”); see also 142 Cong. Rec. S9458 (daily ed. Aug. 2, 1996) (statement of Sen. Lautenberg) (this legislation “stands for the simple proposition that if you beat your wife . . . you should not have a gun”).

<sup>9</sup> See Campbell, Jacquelyn C., “Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide,” National Institute of Justice Journal, November 2003, Issue No. 250, at p. 18. Nor are intimate partners the only ones at risk. In nearly 40 percent of domestic violence homicides, perpetrators kill more than one person, including children, relatives, or bystanders. See Florida Governor’s Task Force on Domestic and Sexual Violence, Florida Mortality Review Project Report, at 51 (1997).

partner homicides involved guns.<sup>10</sup> An abuser's access to guns increases the risk of homicide to their partners *eight-fold*.<sup>11</sup> As a recent study by the leading researcher on domestic violence concluded, "women who were threatened or assaulted with a gun or other weapon were 20 times more likely than other women to be murdered."<sup>12</sup> That study concluded:

A highly controlling abusive partner with a history of relationship separation and access to guns remained the strongest risk factors of intimate partner femicide. . . . Abusers' previous threats with a weapon and threats to kill resulted in substantially higher risks of femicide.

Id. The implications are clear: Once Muhammad used a loaded gun to threaten to "blow your brains out," it was frighteningly likely that one or more homicides would occur.

**B. The Decision Undermines the Public Interest in Identifying and Restraining Abusively Violent Police Officers.**

Studies have confirmed that "overall rates of violence [by police officers] are considerably higher than those reported for a random sample of

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<sup>10</sup> See U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Homicide Trends in the U.S.: Intimate Homicide," (2002); see also Greenfeld, Lawrence A., *et al.*, "Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends and Girlfriends," Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998), at 10.

<sup>11</sup> Kellerman, Arthur L., *et al.*, "Gun Ownership as a Risk Factor for Homicide in the Home," 329 N. Eng. J. Med. 1084, 1087 (1992).

<sup>12</sup> Id. at 16.

civilians.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, in two studies, approximately 40% of police officers admitted violence was occurring in the family, and in one, 28% of officers admitted to being the perpetrators.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, victims of police-perpetrated domestic violence face even greater barriers in reporting abuse and seeking help than other victims.<sup>15</sup> Yet, rather than assisting victims in overcoming the extraordinary barriers they face in seeking safety, the decision below raises yet another barrier that will only discourage victims from seeking much-needed protection from abusive partners.

In addition to endangering their partners and families, abusive police officers jeopardize the public interest in maintaining a competent and professional police force. As the FBI’s Behavioral Science Unit recently concluded in an analysis of police-perpetrated domestic violence:

[I]f a police officer batters himself, his ability to conduct an

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<sup>13</sup> See Neidig, P.H., Russell, H.E., and Seng, A.F., “Interspousal Aggression in Law Enforcement Families: A Preliminary Investigation,” *Police Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, at 37 (1992).

<sup>14</sup> See *id.* at 32; see also Johnson, Leonor, “On the Front Lines: Police Stress and Family Well-Being,” *Testimony for the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families* (1991).

<sup>15</sup> “While considerable clinical and investigative attention has documented the difficulties encountered by women attempting to leave abusive relationships, evidence suggests police spouses experience greater difficulty.” Sheehan, Donald C., “Domestic Violence by Police Officers,” U.S. Dept. of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Behavioral Science Unit, at 3 (2000) (hereafter “FBI Report”).

objective investigation of the problem in other cases decreases. . . [P]olice officers in relationships characterized by severe conflict may view domestic violence as more normal and tend to identify with the male offender. Not surprisingly, an association exists between severely conflicted police families and the officer's level of effectiveness and judgment in the work place, both of which increase the risk of use of excessive force.

See supra note 14, FBI Report at 4. “[T]he prevalence of domestic violence among police raises concerns not only about the safety of their families, but also about their zeal in investigating allegations of domestic abuse by others.” Lininger, Tom, “A Better Way to Disarm Batterers,” 54 *Hastings L.J.* 525, 572-73 (March 2003).

### **CONCLUSION**

For all the foregoing reasons, DV LEAP and its fellow *amici* respectfully request that the Court grant Ms. Gilbert's Petition for Review.

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## APPENDIX

### ***Amici* and their Statements of Interest**

*Amici* include two dozen national, state, local, and academic organizations dedicated to vindicating the rights of domestic violence victims — some of the oldest and largest domestic violence organizations in the country — who jointly file this *amicus* memorandum in support of appellant Cherry Gilbert's Petition for Review before this Court.

*Amici* offer a unique, national collective voice on domestic violence issues, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues that courts and the law enforcement community face in dealing with domestic violence. As their Statements of Interest make clear below, each *amicus* organization has a stake in supporting the reversal of the trial court's decision in this case: to ensure that this ruling is not allowed to send a chilling message to victims of domestic violence across the nation — **especially victims of police officers** — that their safety must be pitted against their rights to marital property, and that they, rather than their abusers, may be punished financially for the consequences of his abuse.

*Amici* and their individual Statements of Interest are listed below:

## **National Organizations**

**Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project** • Lead *amicus* DV LEAP is a nationwide non-profit legal organization dedicated to assisting victims of domestic violence and educating courts around the country on issues related to domestic violence, particularly through efforts on domestic violence related litigation and appellate representation. DV LEAP is a partnership of the George Washington University School of Law, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and a network of participating law firms.

**National Network to End Domestic Violence** • NNEDV is a membership organization representing state domestic violence coalitions, and is dedicated to creating a social, political, and economic environment that seeks to end violence against women.

**NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund** • NOW Legal Defense is a leading national civil rights organization that uses the power of law to define and defend women's rights. NOW Legal Defense is dedicated to working to end domestic violence, and regularly represents victims of domestic violence in housing, employment and immigration cases.

**Domestic Violence Report** • The DVR is a bi-monthly newsletter distributed to more than 1,200 domestic violence programs around the country, including judges, police, and academics. The newsletter provides assistance on legislation, protocols, and other appropriate responses to domestic violence.

**Stop Family Violence** • Stop Family Violence is a national grass-roots activist organization with more than 30,000 members, including approximately 1,000 in Washington State. SFV organizes and amplifies a national collective voice against family violence, and promotes accountability, justice, and safety for victims of violent relationships.

**STOPDV (Specialized Training on Preventing Domestic Violence)** • STOPDV addresses issues surrounding violence against women and children, with an emphasis on domestic violence by law enforcement personnel. STOPDV provides training for law enforcement agencies, and assists with lawsuits and litigation on behalf of victims of police officers' abuse. Such victims are at substantially greater risk because their abusers

are part of the police force and have advantages, knowledge and connections that often protect them from being brought to justice.

**Women’s Law Project** • Based in Pennsylvania, WLP is a non-profit public interest program dedicated to improving the legal and economic status of women through litigation, public policy, and education, and counseling. WLP engages in national advocacy on a wide variety of family law issues, especially domestic violence and divorce.

### **State Organizations**

**Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline** • DVCLH is an advocate for system reform of domestic violence in Hawaii, and promotes responsiveness to victims, provides legal representation (including protection orders), and conducts domestic violence outreach in both civil and criminal courts in Hawaii.

**Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence** • The GCADV is a non-profit organization comprised of a network of domestic violence programs in Georgia, committed to eliminating violence against women by promoting system change and intervention programs for battered women. The GCADV also provides technical assistance and training on domestic violence to lawyers, judges, law enforcement, and advocates.

**Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence** • A statewide coalition throughout Indiana, ICADV is committed to the elimination of domestic violence through providing public awareness and education, advocating systemic and societal change, influencing public policy and allocation of resources, educating and strengthening coalition members, and promoting the availability of comprehensive services.

**Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence** • MCADV is a statewide network of programs providing support, shelter, advocacy, and direct services to battered women and their children throughout Missouri. MCADV seeks to end domestic violence by providing training and technical assistance to professionals, public policy advocacy, and education for the general public.

**Ohio Domestic Violence Network** • ODVN is a collective voice of more than 100 domestic violence programs throughout Ohio, which advocates

for battered persons, produces and shares information, educates about options, and encourages for social change.

**Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence •** OCADSV seeks to raise awareness about violence against women and children and to work towards non-violence through leadership in advocacy, public policy, resource development and social change. While OCADSV primarily serves Oregon’s domestic and sexual violence programs, it joins in national matters when issues of significance to survivors such as those presented in this case arise.

**Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence •** The Coalition is a statewide, non-profit membership network of domestic and sexual violence programs and individuals working to end violence against women and children. The Coalition provides technical assistance, information, and training to domestic violence programs in Tennessee, and also collaborates with several national organizations in seeking to increase awareness and understanding about domestic violence.

### **Local Organizations**

**Ayuda’s Clinica Legal Latina •** For more than 30 years, Ayuda has provided legal services to low-income immigrants in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Its domestic violence clinic provides holistic legal and social services to battered immigrants and minorities.

**Center for Community Solutions •** For 35 years CCS has been a social change agency with an emphasis on the treatment, intervention, and prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault.

**Domestic Violence Civil Legal Services, Inc. •** DVC Legal Services is a non-profit domestic violence law firm representing indigent domestic violence victims in civil matters, particularly protection orders, and also in divorce, and child custody.

**John Jay Legal Services, Inc., Pace University School of Law •** As part of Pace University’s Clinical Legal Education Program, John Jay Legal Services provides free legal services, including a clinic in which students prosecute misdemeanor domestic violence offenders in New York City, and a Family Court Externship which assists unrepresented victims

of intimate violence in the Family Courts of Westchester County, including drafting protection orders.

**Rutgers School of Law-Camden Domestic Violence Clinic and Project**

This comprehensive program provides pro bono legal services to victims of domestic violence in Camden County, New Jersey. Volunteer law students provide legal information to domestic violence victims and refer appropriate cases for pro bono representation either in the law school's in-house Domestic Violence Clinic or to the local legal services organization.

**Sanctuary for Families** • Sanctuary for Families is committed to ensuring the well-being of domestic violence victims throughout the New York City metropolitan area. It provides a complete program of interconnected services with an interdisciplinary, holistic approach, including crisis and transitional shelter, individual and group counseling, legal services, and a specialized program for children.

**University Legal Assistance** • This non-profit law firm operates as a law school clinic within Gonzaga School of Law in Spokane, Washington. Its Family Law / Domestic Violence Project represents domestic violence survivors, and protective parents and grandparents of abused children.

**WEAVE (Women Empowered Against Violence)** • WEAVE seeks to empower domestic violence victims in the Washington, D.C. area, to remove them from the cycle of abuse and help them achieve self-sufficiency, and to de-stigmatize the myths of domestic violence. It does so by providing comprehensive legal, economic, and emotional counseling, representation, advocacy and support.

**Will County Legal Assistance Program, Inc.** • The program provides free legal services to low-income and senior citizen residents of Will County, Illinois. The majority of its work focuses on domestic violence, including protection orders and other family law matter, assisting more than 800 victims per year. It also conducts community outreach and education seminars on domestic violence.

**Women Against Abuse, Inc.** • Women Against Abuse is a non-profit, public interest organization which provides legal representation, advocacy, counseling, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and other support services to victims of domestic violence throughout Philadelphia. The organization also works to implement public policies to ensure victims of

domestic violence will be protected from future violence. Women Against Abuse established the first legal clinic in the nation of its kind to represent victims of domestic violence.