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Pro Bono Amicus Brief by California Women's Law Center and Troutman Pepper Contributes to Major Appellate Win for Survivors of Domestic Violence

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ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. – A June 2021 amicus curiae brief co-authored by the California Women's Law Center—together with a team of Troutman Pepper attorneys working pro bono—has contributed to a powerful appellate win for survivors of domestic violence in California.

The appeal sought to challenge a mutual restraining order that a superior court had issued against both a survivor and her abuser in a domestic violence proceeding. In a ground-breaking precedential opinion published on October 26, the California Court of Appeal (Fourth Appellate District, Division 3) not only lifted the restraining order with respect to the survivor and affirmed it against her abuser, but it also reversed a joint custody order affecting the parties' child. The opinion contains important cautions to litigants and trial court judges about the dangers of implicit bias—an issue that was at the heart of the amicus brief.

The brief was filed on behalf of the [California Women's Law Center](#) and 24 supporting co-signatories from around the country, including the Battered Women's Justice Project; the Los Angeles LGBT Center; and Professor Joan S. Meier, one of the country's leading experts on domestic violence law and director of the National Family Violence Law Center at The George Washington University Law School. The Troutman Pepper cohort consisted of Partner Pamela Palmer, Counsel [Elizabeth Holt Andrews](#), and associates Lauren Grochow and Cindy Lee.

"We are thrilled with the outcome, and especially the Court's decision to publish this opinion," said Andrews, who served as lead writer of the brief. "It will immediately become an important precedent in California. We hope it will help a lot of other domestic violence survivors to stave off unfair mutual restraining orders."

"True instances of mutual domestic abuse are rare," added Chelsea Mutual, Senior Staff Attorney at the California Women's Law Center. "The law should not be used to create a false equivalence between an abuser and the abused based on implicit biases. We hope this case will serve as a useful precedent for protecting and securing justice on behalf of domestic violence survivors in the future."

Each year, Troutman Pepper attorneys dedicate thousands of pro bono hours in support of nonprofits, military veterans, children, the wrongfully accused, and so many more. Learn more at troutman.com/pro-bono.

The amicus brief is available [here](#).

California Women's Law Center

The California Women's Law Center (CWLC) is a nonprofit law and policy center whose mission is to create a more just and equitable society by breaking down barriers and advancing the potential of women and girls through impact litigation, policy advocacy, and education. Since its inception in 1989, CWLC has placed a particular emphasis on eradicating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and maintains a focus on low-income women and girls and communities of color. CWLC stands with survivors by representing plaintiffs seeking restraining orders, training legal advocates on the laws related to domestic violence, and producing detailed guides for lawyers and non-lawyers who are navigating the court system. More information about CWLC's work can be found at <https://www.cwlc.org/>.

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