wanted fugitives, but the District Attorney's comments persuaded me that adoption of the amendment at this time could make it harder for the District Attorney's efforts with Mexico to succeed.

On balance, while the bill is not all that I would wish in all respects, I think it deserves approval and I will vote for it.

SUPREME COURT DECISION IN CASTLEROCK V. GONZALES

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, we have heard much discourse today about two decisions handed down by the Supreme Court yesterday that addressed the constitutionality of displaying the 10 Commandments.

This is an important issue, but I believe that another case handed down yesterday, Castle Rock v. Gonzales, deserves serious attention as well.

Let me begin by saying that I am deeply disappointed with the Supreme Court's decision in Castle Rock v. Gonzales. In that case, the Court revealed a policy that strikes fear and sadness in the hearts of domestic violence victims and those of us who fight on their behalf: victims do not have a federal constitutional right to due process when they seek enforcement of their protective orders.

Jessica Gonzales's story elicits anger and sadness. Jessica Gonzales's relationship with her husband was dangerous and abusive. Knowing the threat he posed to her and her children, she mustered a tremendous amount of personal strength and obtained a protective order against her husband from the State of Colorado. She went through this arduous process believing that the state and local authorities would come to her aid if her husband violated the order. She did not think she would have to beg and plead with them to enforce it.

She was wrong. The New York Times reported today that:

> For hours on the night of June 22, 1999, Jessica Gonzales tried to get the . . . police to find and arrest her estranged husband . . . who was under a court order to stay 100 yards away from the house. He had taken the children, ages 7, 9, and 10, as they played outside, and he later called his wife to tell her that he had the girls at an amusement park in Denver.
>
> Ms. Gonzales conveyed the information to the police, but they failed to act before Mr. Gonzales arrived at the police station hours later, firing a gun, with the bodies of the girls in the back of his truck. The police killed him at the scene.''

Mr. Gonzales murdered their daughters after Ms. Gonzales spent hours trying to get the police to pay attention to her plight. This should never have happened.

A protective order without guaranteed enforcement does not protect victims. It puts them in the position of being victimized over and over again.

Domestic violence victims are already among the most vulnerable in our system. When they have children they are trying to protect, that vulnerability is compounded. Victims and their families rely on protective orders as one of the only tools they have to escape violent homes and relationships.

We need to make sure that they know that a court-issued protective order, accompanied by a hearing and court appearance in front of their abuser, is worth more than the paper it is printed on.

Recently, I introduced legislation that has received bipartisan support. H.R. 2947 seeks to require domestic violence education programs in high schools to teach teenage victims of dating violence about the legal options available to them as they seek to extricate themselves from abusive relationships.

I want this legislation to have its intended impact: that more teenage victims will have the knowledge that they are not alone in their struggle to end abusive relationships and that there are legal processes available to aid them in this process.

These young people, and every victim seeking the same assistance, need to know that the legal steps in place will actually protect them.

We cannot change the Supreme Court's decision, but we can do our part to prevent Jessica Gonzales's horrific situation from replicating itself across the nation.

First, we can pass my legislation, H.R. 2947. Second, we can strengthen and reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act before it expires on September 30th of this year. These victims deserve no less.