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**Victim of Domestic Violence Sues After Being Fired**

*Legal Voice and Columbia Legal Services*

*Bring Leading Case Under New Law*

Moses Lake, WA --- September 14, 2010 --- An eastern Washington woman today became the first person to file suit under a law passed in 2008, the Domestic Violence Leave Act, RCW 49.76, that requires employers to give employees reasonable time off to attend court, take steps to achieve safety, and ensure the safety of their children if the employee is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.

“Jane Doe” (who filed the lawsuit under a pseudonym because she fears for her life) worked for Genie Industries, Inc., in its Moses Lake plant. She had a protection order prohibiting her ex-husband from coming near her or her children because of multiple incidents of domestic violence against her, including inflicting severe injuries on her and threatening to kill her. Ms. Doe had secretly relocated to Moses Lake to escape him. In 2008, Ms. Doe’s husband found her in Moses Lake and began following her and her children.

Ms. Doe reported her fears and the past history of abuse to her supervisors at Genie Industries and explained her need to take time off to protect her family. When her ex-husband continued to stalk her, she again notified her supervisors and took time off to confer with the police, research options for secure shelter, and make sure her children could attend school safely. Rather than provide any support or assistance to Ms. Doe, Genie Industries, in direct violation

of state law, initially sanctioned then ultimately fired her. “We encourage victims of domestic violence to leave dangerous situations and protect themselves and their children. And what is the result? They lose their jobs. That’s not only wrong, it’s illegal”, said Janet Chung, attorney for Legal Voice, which co-represents Ms. Doe. Legal Voice led efforts to pass the law after another client, Ramona Danny, was fired for taking leave to care for her children and cooperate with prosecutors.

“This law protects families,” said Eric M. Gutiérrez, attorney with Columbia Legal Services, which also represents Ms. Doe. “Just as other laws safeguard employment when caring for a sick child, the Domestic Violence Leave Act ensures that victims of domestic violence are able to take reasonable leave to make arrangements to protect themselves and their children.”

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**Legal Voice** is a nonprofit women’s rights legal organization that pursues justice for all women and girls in the Northwest through ground-breaking litigation, legislative advocacy, and educational tools to help individuals understand their rights.

**Columbia Legal Services** (CLS) is a nonprofit law firm that protects and defends the legal and human rights of low-income people. CLS represents people and organizations in Washington State with critical legal needs who have no other legal assistance available to them.