

**Jennice Fuentes**  
Chief of Staff, Representative Luis Gutiérrez of Illinois

## **Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

### **Being a Caseworker**

Jennice Fuentes describes her experience as a caseworker in Resident Commissioner Jaime Fuster's office and what it revealed about her personality.

*Interview recorded December 20, 2018*

I didn't realize how much I would enjoy public service until I came. And also being a caseworker became a huge reveal and a discovery about myself and my own skillset and desire to help people. I think that's where my—the real public service really began. Because, you know, when you're a caseworker there's nothing about policy. You're not advising anyone about anything that could be good for your district, for the country, or for anyone for that matter. You're helping people one on one with their cases, and it really is being a caseworker. It's, and it's really work that normally is done for the district office and congressional offices, but because in Puerto Rico, you know, it's a constituency—at the time there was more than three million—we had a lot of work and so they gave cases also to people in, in the Washington DC office. So I discovered very quickly that I had a, I had a talent for helping people, because I enjoyed it, and if you came with me, to me, if you came to me with your problem, I would want to help you and fix it. And it was, and I would open a file and if it was—it was simple things. You know, I wasn't saving lives. But it was things like your, you hadn't received your veteran benefits, or you were having trouble getting an appointment, or you moved and Social Security's check had not arrived, or you felt discriminated against because x, y, z, or your fiancé was having a problem with her visa and she couldn't get the visa. It's all these little things that when you solve them it made such a difference in someone's lives, and you got this glowing letter of how you'd done—it's almost like I had saved them.