

Jennice Fuentes
Chief of Staff, Representative Luis Gutiérrez of Illinois

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Human Aspect

Jennice Fuentes recalls her experience during district “citizenship days,” when members of Representative Gutiérrez’s staff assisted immigrants with their legal paperwork.

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You know, it’s really about the human aspect of it. I think that when you meet these people, and when you, you see they are suffering by looking into their eyes, and see how, for instance, how grateful they are. I will never forget. I used to sit at the workshops and, you know, said, “You next!” And they would come in and sit down, and, you know, the gratitude—it was amazing. It was like being a doctor. I couldn’t believe it. I mean, they would cry. I mean, I want to cry just thinking about it, because you did something as simple as take the time to fill the application, and ask them the questions, and verify that and say, “Okay, sir, we’re going to submit this and you’re going to hear in a few weeks.” And, you know, more than once after I said goodbye to this family—because sometimes they would come the entire family, even if it was just you filling out—you’ll bring your husband and the kids, and everybody will be there at the desk watching everything. Like, this is an important moment. And more than once—we would do this in, in churches or in school auditoriums—more than once after the family left they would come back, and they would find me, and I’d be like, “Is there something wrong?” He says, “No, no, we just wanted to give you, to give you a card, a thank you card, and flowers.” And I’m like, “Oh.” It was amazing. It was amazing the difference you could do in somebody’s life.