

Latin group, fired illegal aliens suing Pasadena school district

By **LORI RODRIGUEZ**
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The League of United Latin American Citizens and four illegal alien women fired last month by the Pasadena Independent School District for using phony Social Security numbers Tuesday filed a federal class-action lawsuit alleging discrimination.

Since illegal aliens are not entitled to valid Social Security numbers, said Isaias D. Torres, attorney for the plaintiffs, any policy that deliberately weeds out employees without such numbers also deliberately weeds out illegal aliens.

All four women were employed as custodians before the immigration bill signed last November prohibited the hiring of illegal aliens. The four should have been protected by its grandfather clause, Torres said.

He said the women have lived in

this country since before Jan. 1, 1982, and are eligible to apply for legalization under the bill.

"Unfortunately, their chances of applying successfully have now been damaged," Torres said.

Although applicants for legalization are not required to be employed, said Leonel Castillo, former commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, illegal aliens must prove they are not likely to become a public charge, and that is very difficult without having a job.

The suit's plaintiffs are LULAC District 8, Maria Olympia Hernandez, Reina Raquel Guillen, Blanca Lopez and Maria Garza.

The suit seeks a temporary restraining order to restore the women's jobs while the case is decided, back wages and a permanent injunction preventing Pasadena ISD officials from similarly dismissing other illegals.

"These women didn't come forward on their own, as school officials have said," Torres said. "They were told by their supervisor that they had to come forward and admit they had used false numbers, or they would be turned over to INS.

"They were coerced and threatened."

"We were told that if we didn't come forward, we would go to jail," said Lopez, 30, who is pregnant and who was using her earnings to pay her medical costs.

Pasadena ISD officials, who fired the four plaintiffs and asked three other illegals to resign for the same reason, have denied coercing the women and have said longstanding policy is to fire employees who lie on job applications.

A hearing on a temporary restraining order will probably be held next week.