

# Suit says Pasadena schools discriminated in firing 4 workers

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Post Reporter

An attorney filed a class-action lawsuit Tuesday on behalf of a civil rights group and four undocumented workers, claiming that the Pasadena Independent School District discriminated against the aliens in firing them last month.

Isaias Torres said he filed the suit in the court of U.S. District Judge Gabrielle McDonald on behalf of the former custodial workers and the League of United Latin American Citizens.

Torres said the workers were singled out to be fired because they were Hispanic aliens.

But school district officials stood by the dismissals of Maria Olympia Hernandez, Reina Raquel Guillen, Blanca Lydia Lopez and Maria Antonia Garza. District officials said the women voluntarily admitted breaking a longstand-

ing district policy when they listed false Social Security numbers on their job applications.

Harvey Turner, Pasadena school board president, said the board voted 5-2 at two meetings not to reinstate the workers.

Turner said even the district's superintendent would have been

fired for giving false job information. "If it had been any employee, it would not have made any difference," Turner said.

Torres said he will ask for a temporary restraining order by next week to force the district to rehire the workers until the suit is resolved. Torres said at a press

conference to announce the filing of the suit that the defendants are seeking collective back wages of between \$10,000 and \$15,000.

Torres said the suit covers about 100 workers, the number believed to be undocumented among PISD's 360 custodial workers.

The suit states PISD "threat-

ened and coerced" the workers — all women — "into revealing their undocumented status and false Social Security numbers."

The women, three Mexican nationals and a Salvadoran, said they were told to provide valid Social Security numbers or face possible deportation or fines up to

\$900 for each of their dependents.

The women said that they hope to apply for amnesty in May under new immigration laws. The women said they have lived in the United States since 1982, a requirement for amnesty under the new law.

A LULAC official and an immigration attorney hailed the suit Tuesday, saying the action sends a message to other employers not to fire other undocumented workers who plan to apply for legalization.

Immigration officials have said some employers, confused over new immigration law, have fired some workers protected by a grandfather clause of the law.

Meanwhile, a federal judge in California signed an agreement between the Immigration and Naturalization Service and immigrant groups that allows aliens to work — starting immediately — if they are eligible for amnesty.