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State sues security companies, union

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Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott on Tuesday filed lawsuits in El Paso and Corpus Christi against three security companies and a union for allegedly violating the state's right-to-work laws.

One lawsuit stems from a case involving an El Paso security guard who was removed from his job last year because he refused to join a union or pay union fees.

The guard, Juan Vielma, returned to his job this week after a federal administrative law judge in June ruled in his favor and ordered him reinstated.

Abbott filed the El Paso lawsuit against the International Union, Security, Police and Fire Professionals of America, and a joint venture of New Mexico-based Akal Security and Minnesota-based Deco Security.

The lawsuit claims Deco-Akal and the union entered into an unlawful contract that required Deco-Akal employees at a federal facility in El Paso to join the union or pay union dues contrary to Texas' right-to-work laws.

The union and companies have argued that the Texas law does not apply at the federal facility. But the Texas attorney general said in a written statement that their claim is false because a federal administrative law judge in June ruled the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility is "not a federal enclave" and is subject to Texas law. The union is appealing the judge's ruling.

An official for Akal Security said the company had no comment on the lawsuit. Union officials were not available for comment Tuesday.

Abbott also filed a lawsuit against the same union and Asset Protection and Security Services, of Corpus Christi, for violating the state's right-to-work laws in a similar case in Corpus Christi.

There, a security guard at a federal facility, Carlos Banuelos, was told to pay union fees or face termination, and Banuelos complied in order to keep his job, the attorney general's lawsuit states.

Both lawsuits ask state courts to stop the union and companies from enforcing their contracts, and seeks civil penalties against the union up to \$1,000 per violation and reimbursement to employees for union fees paid under the contract.

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, which filed legal actions for Vielma and Banuelos, in a statement welcomed the attorney general's action, but added that "the violations foundation attorneys uncovered in Corpus Christi and El Paso may only be the tip of the iceberg."

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