

## 05-22-2011 Filipino migrant teachers in Louisiana win POEA case

Press Release

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PM is assisting the Filipino migrant teachers in their organizing efforts through a US-based liaison officer and in their legal case here in the Philippines. Among the complainants who won an award from the POEA is Mairi Nunag-Tanedo who is executive vice president of the Filipino Educators Federation of Louisiana (FEFL), the organization formed by the US-based teachers in pursuit of their campaign for justice against their illegal recruiters.

"We encourage other teachers who have been similarly victimized by PARS and UPI or other illegal recruiters to come out and fight for your rights. We will support you and through perseverance, you will surely win as the precedent of the Louisiana teachers have shown," Miranda added.

In the decision signed by POEA Administrator Carlos S. Cao, Jr., the local-based PARS International Placement Agency and the US-based Universal Placement International (UPI) was found guilty of overcharging of fees. The license of PARS was ordered cancelled, and its officers and directors of the agency at the time the offense was committed were also prohibited from engaging in the business of overseas placement. Fines were also imposed on PARS. Finally, refunds in amounts ranging from USD 4,583.33 to USD 7,169.33 were awarded to 10 complainants.

Moreover UPI was prohibited from participating in the overseas placement program of the government. The owners of PARS and UPI, Emilio V. Villarba and Lourdes Navarro respectively, were also put in the POEA's list of people with derogatory records. These two entities, according to PM and FEFL are owned and operated by one family since Villarba and Navarro are siblings.

In separate cases filed by some 15 teachers more than a year ago, the two agencies were accused of over-charging their clients of placement and other fees, and contract violations. Last April 10, 2010, the LWC ruled that UPI had charged the teachers certain fees which were prohibited and premature under state laws, and ordered it to repay the Filipino teachers \$1.8 million in illegally charged fees. ###

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