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Newsday Photo / Karen Wiles Stabile

Leonard Fillyaw, from left, Loren Montano, Assemb. Philip Ramos and Luis Oliveria with their lawyer Fred Brewington.

## Suffolk Hit With Lawsuit

### Minority residents sue over failure to redraw district lines

By Valerie Burgher

STAFF WRITER

Nassau civil rights attorney Frederick Brewington filed a federal suit against the Suffolk County Legislature Friday morning on behalf of minority residents and Latino Assemb. Phil Ramos (D-Brentwood) for the county's failure to redraw district lines.

At a news conference in Mineola, Brewington announced the case, currently in Eastern District Court, which alleges lawmakers violated the Voting Rights Act and their own county charter by delaying action.

Brewington said "tens of thousands of residents of Latino and African-American descent" were being disenfranchised because of lack of appropriate representation.

"Primaries, elections and political candidates are already being thrown into a quagmire," because of Suffolk's lack of a plan, he said, adding that the suit gives Suffolk 10 days to act, or be "enjoined" from conducting any other government business until they did. The Suffolk County charter stipulates lawmakers must establish new legislative districts no less than six months after Census data is published.

Suffolk received the information in 2001 which indi-

cated a surge in Brentwood and Central Islip's Hispanic and black populations. Still, lawmakers have no plan of action to create a majority-minority district.

Also present was Puerto Rican Defense Counsel representative Raquel Batista, who submitted two 18-district plans to each lawmaker in December and again in February without response.

Suffolk officials conceded there had been delays. "Technically, yeah, we missed the mark," said legislative counsel Paul Sabatino. Government insiders, however, said the wait is rooted in this year's contentious race for presiding officer between Legis. Paul Tonna (R-West Hills) and the eventual victor Legis. Maxine Postal (D-Amityville).

In order to secure the top post, sources said, Postal had to agree to support a map protecting Legis. Cameron Alden (R-Islip). Neither the Defense Fund's proposal nor the Democratic proposal does that. Postal denied the allegation, saying the process "was much more difficult than people imagine," adding that adhering to the Defense Fund plan would have divided the Central Islip School District.

She added that lawmakers could have a plan as early as Monday afternoon.

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