

PIP sues over primary funding

The Puerto Rican Independence Party made a bid Wednesday to halt public funding of the presidential primaries here.

The PIP filed a suit in San Juan Superior Court calling for the court to enjoin the use of public funds and to declare the funding law unconstitutional.

The action claims the present funding law is illegal on a technicality, and unconstitutional because it helps pay expenses here of non-Puerto Rican political parties.

"Neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party of the United States is a Puerto Rican political party, as defined in the Electoral Law of Puerto Rico," the suit states. Since neither party is an integral part of the local election process, spending public money on its primaries here violates the Puerto Rican Constitution, according to the PIP suit.

The activities of stateside parties on the island also constitute a movement directed toward permanent union between Puerto Rico and the U.S. the suit says. It charges such activities violate constitutional guarantees that citizens will be able to freely choose Puerto Rico's final political destiny.

Defendants in the action are Elections Administrator Gerineldo Barreto Perez and Treasury Secretary Julio Cesar Perez.

The Senate upped its primaries appropriation to \$954,000 Wednesday. The Legislature had previously set aside \$518,000 for the primaries.

Sen. Juan Maldonado Torres Torres, PDP-Arecibo, was the only minority member to

back the New Progressive Party bill.

Sen. Ruth Fernandez, PDP-at large, was not present and other Popular Democratic Party senators abstained from voting.

Before the session started, the PDP — whose members are individually campaigning for Sen. Edward Kennedy— announced the minority senators would abstain from voting on the bill.

They said the New Progressive Party was "imposing" the primaries on the island, and that the national parties themselves should pay the cost of holding the vote. As a party, the PDP is opposed to participation in national politics.

They also made reference to a Commonwealth Supreme Court decision in 1978 regarding financing of a Democratic Party delegate selection process.

The PIP suit hopes to accomplish what a previous court case brought by the Puerto Rican Socialist Party did in 1978. In that case, the Commonwealth Supreme Court ruled that the Legislature had exceeded its authority and violated the Constitution by assigning \$600,000 in public funds for a Democratic Party primary here.

The high court said then that the Legislature cannot adopt any law that in some significant way modifies the island's political relationship with the United States. It indicated that holding a national political party primary here would be pushing the island toward a more permanent political relationship with the U.S.