

Business Report

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Court's discrimination ruling could hurt workers' lawsuits

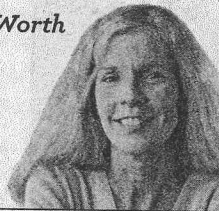
California workers will have a harder time winning employment discrimination cases in the wake of the state Supreme Court's recent decision in *Harris vs. City of Santa Monica*. How much harder depends on how lower courts interpret the decision.

Lawyers for employers hailed the Feb. 7 decision as a big victory and some are already using it in pending court cases and settlement negotiations.

However, a jury in Los

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Angeles last week awarded a plaintiff \$21.8 million in a mental-disability suit. Deliberation in that case was postponed for one day so the *Harris* decision could be incorporated into the

jury instructions, says Bruce Kokozyan, a lawyer for the plaintiff, April Rodriguez.

In the *Harris* case, the city of Santa Monica fired bus driver Wynona Harris in May 2005, six days after she told her boss she was pregnant. Harris said she was fired because she was pregnant. The city said she was fired for having two noninjury accidents and being late for work twice during her first five months.

A jury found that her
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