

AFDC

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Court ruling due today on AFDC payment cuts

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SAN FRANCISCO — A federal judge is expected to rule today on a class action suit filed to block cuts in Aid to Families with Dependent Children scheduled to take effect Jan. 1.

At stake are millions of dollars in welfare benefits to nearly 73,000 California families.

In a two-hour court battle Tuesday, attorneys for the California Coalition of Welfare Rights and two individual AFDC recipients charged the federal government evaded requirements for a full public hearing before issuing its regulations implementing new Reagan administration budget cuts.

The cutbacks were signed into law Sept. 22 and became effective Oct. 1.

Implementation of the cutbacks was delayed until the new year by a previous court action.

Eric Gold, an attorney with the Alameda County Legal Aid Society, told U.S. District Judge Thelton Henderson the public hearing requirement "is a funda-

mental principle."

"Before a bureaucracy makes a fundamental decision which affects people's lives, the people must have an opportunity to comment," Gold said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Stoll, representing the government, countered that the failure to hold hearings was, at most, only a "theoretical violation of the law," because there was a 60-day period for comment after the regulations were in force.

Aid to the affected AFDC recipients will eventually be terminated or cut anyway and "they won't really be affected by the outcome of this lawsuit," Stoll said.

The new regulations include provisions terminating aid to any AFDC family earning more than 1½ times the amount of the grant to which it would be entitled, reducing child-care expenses from their actual amount to a flat \$150 a month and reducing work-related expenses from their actual amount to a flat \$75 a month.

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