

LeDoux, Stevens React To Supreme Court Decision

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Reaction is still coming in over the U.S. Supreme Court's decision Wednesday to cut the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill punitive damages to less than one-tenth the original jury award. Kodiak's delegation to the state capital were not happy with the decision.

Kodiak Representative Gabrielle LeDoux said she would not describe the 507-point-5-million dollar award as "bitter-sweet";

-- (EVOS LeDoux 1 22 sec "and it's most of my constituents very happy.")

Kodiak Senator Gary Stevens said the reduction in the award, first from 5-billion-dollars, then to 2-point-5-billion, and ultimately 507-point-5-million, will have a tremendous affect on the lives of the plaintiffs:

-- (EVOS Stevens 1 17 sec "and it's really just a sad day.")

LeDoux, who is an attorney, says the purpose of punitive damages is to punish, and the high court's decision did not do that:

-- (EVOS
LeDoux 2 24 sec "bottles
are coming uncorked in the Exxon boardroom.")

The Supreme Court ruled the punitive award should be the same as the compensatory damages and a one-to-one ratio. There is concern that decision sets a precedent for punitive damages in similar cases of corporate irresponsibility. Stevens says Alaskans should keep that in mind during the licensing process for the proposed Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay:

-- (EVOS
Stevens 2 21 sec "do damage and aren't called to task for it.")

The Pebble Gold and Copper Mine could be one of the largest open-pit mines in world, north of Lake Iliamna, home to the spawning grounds for much of Bristol Bay's salmon run. The preliminary design also calls for an earthen embankment larger than the Hoover Dam to hold back a man-made lake that would be filled with

cyanide-laced mining waste.

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