Senate Judiciary Committee Hears From Exxon Claimant

Thursday, 24 July 2008

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Casey Kelly/KMXT

The U-S Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing yesterday (Wednesday) on recent Supreme Court decisions that have favored big business in cases of corporate misconduct.

The hearing included testimony from fisherman Osa Schultz of Cordova on the ruling last month limiting punitive damages in the Exxon Valdez oil spill case. Schultz told the committee it would be easy to assume 19-and-a-half years after the spill that Exxon had cleaned up the mess and paid for all of the damages. Nothing could be further from the truth, she said.

(Judiciary 1 :30s “…David to their Goliath.”)

Schultz went on to describe how the fishing co-op that she and her husband belonged to went bankrupt as a result of the spill, and said there were countless others in Alaska with stories just like theirs. And she became emotional when she said that the high court sent the wrong message to corporations in setting a one-to-one ration between compensatory and punitive damages.

(Judiciary 2 :33s “…thank you.”)

Committee chairman Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont thanked Schultz for her testimony.

(Judiciary 3 :10s “…that part of Alaska.”)

Leahy says recent decisions made by the court have concerned him enough to hold other hearings. But he says Congress probably won’t overturn any aspect of the Supreme Court’s Exxon ruling, or censure members of the court as some in Alaska have suggested.

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