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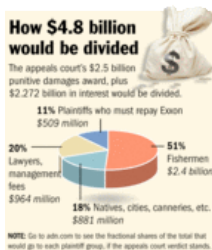
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'Shame pole' points at Exxon

FINAL APPEAL: Court will hear oil giant's last arguments today.

By ERIKA BOLSTAD
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Published: February 27th, 2008 12:29 AM
Last Modified: February 27th, 2008 10:30 AM

WASHINGTON -- For the Alaskans who came to hear the Supreme Court consider the final arguments in the Exxon Valdez case, Mike Webber might have put the 18-year legal fight best.



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Webber, a fisherman and Native artist from Cordova, was explaining the details in his hand-carved "shame pole" on display Tuesday at a press conference.

"As you can see there's a hole in their heart," said Webber, as he described the image of a Native carved into the ridicule totem pole, a traditional means of shaming someone to meet or recognize an obligation. "Exxon did not make us

whole. They pretty much put a hole in our hearts."

Dozens of Alaskans -- many of whom are plaintiffs in the Exxon case -- attended the event to discuss the lingering effects of the 1989 spill. Many hope to get a seat at today's hearing, where the Supreme Court will consider the oil giant's appeal of a \$2.5 billion punitive damages award for the company's role in the 1989 spill from its tanker in Prince William Sound.

Exxon has long maintained that it was punished enough following the spill, and that punitive damages are unwarranted. The



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J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE / The Associated Press
Steve Smith, a fisherman from Cordova, and Gov. Sarah Palin take part in a news conference Feb. 26, 2008, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., held by The Whole Truth Campaign in support of victims of the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

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company said it paid \$3.5 billion in clean-up payments, settlements, compensation and fines, a sum spokesman Tony Cudmore has described as "more than enough to deter anyone for anything."

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The court will be considering whether the company can be punished under maritime law for the actions of its ship captain, Joseph Hazelwood. It also will consider whether punitive damages should be allowed when the company already has been punished under provisions of the federal Clean Water Act. Finally, the court will consider whether the verdict's size is allowable under the limits of maritime law.

Exxon has been appealing the verdict since 1994, when an Anchorage jury returned a \$5 billion punitive damages award. In 2006, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals cut the award to \$2.5 billion. Exxon appealed to the Supreme Court.

Tuesday's event was organized by The Whole Truth Campaign, an organization whose goal is to "unveil the truth about the Exxon Valdez oil spill, generate public awareness and support, and to end Exxon's crusade to escape responsibility."

"Exxon was getting control of the message; we're here to tell the truth," said Jennifer Gibbons, executive director of Prince William Soundkeeper. "The truth is, the Exxon corporation has not lived up to the privilege that it was granted by the people of Alaska. They haven't lived up to the promises or commitments that they made, and the responsibility they accepted when seeking an opportunity to develop our resources."

The event also featured Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, who fielded a question about the conflicting feelings many Alaskans have about the role the oil and gas industry plays in the state: Was she confident that Alaskans, who are so dependent on the oil industry for jobs and growth, support the lawsuit against the country's biggest oil company?

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"Absolutely," Palin said.
"Deterrence here is the operative word. We do not want this to ever happen again to any other community, state, individual."

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9 Thursday, February 28, 2008 - 8:12pm | [tjmlfeznp](#)


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I believe that Exxon has been dragging their feet for too long!! Justice needs to be served, however how many fishermen are going to seek compensation from this settlement? If 2,400 (about the population of Cordova) fishermen split up the 2.4 billion, that's 1 million per fisherman. That's a nice pay check, and worth the wait, but it is time to bring Exxon to justice!

8 Wednesday, February 27, 2008 - 1:02pm | [mariaandskip](#)

Exxon spill

If Exxon refuses to pay up, is there any way they can be excluded from obtaining any of our oil?

7 Wednesday, February 27, 2008 - 8:37am | [iikeneews](#)

BLAH Blah BIAh...

Give us our money.....we deserve it.

6 Wednesday, February 27, 2008 - 8:14am | [este](#)

Contempt

They are in contempt of court orders, in contempt of the Alaskan people, and in contempt of social responsibility, and in contempt of ecological responsibility. Their fines should be increased because they refuse to accept responsibility.

5 Wednesday, February 27, 2008 - 7:47am | [Achievement](#)

two faced Sarah

She bashes Exxon, at the same time Alaska has a massive holding in Exxon stocks -- a quarter of a billion dollars worth.

4 Wednesday, February 27, 2008 - 7:30am | [cupellaq](#)

Mostly unheard...

groups of plaintiffs are silently waiting for a favorable Supreme Court blessing. Those whose income was mostly from commercial salmon throughout Alaska, not just in Prince William Sound. I'm positive there's many misunderstandings around this whole mess, but I'm also positive that the "silent" groups have a valid claim against Exxon. Hoping for a long awaited award to those claimants or their hei ...

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3 Wednesday, February 27, 2008 - 5:18am |

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