

The women carried signs Tuesday alongside U.S. 90 in Biloxi with about 30 other casino workers to protest denial of their claims by GCCF administrator Kenneth Feinberg, a Washington attorney administering the payments.

Saurage's sign said, "1 casino, 2 employees, same position, makes the same money. 1 claim paid, the other denied? Answer this,

Feinberg."

Though hundreds of casino claims have been denied -- including those of dealers, bartenders and wait staff -- bartenders and restaurant workers at other establishments have been compensated. Casino employees and the Sun Herald had been tracking payments by industry, but that information is no longer on the GCCF website, even though Feinberg promised transparency in the claims payment process.

Feinberg spokeswoman Amy Weiss said the information was removed because claimants were concerned about confidentiality. However, the claims information did not give any names or personal details.

Feinberg has appointed a casino liaison, Washington attorney Bill Mulvey.

He is expected to work on issues involving the casino claims. Feinberg has contended each claim is being examined on its merits, denying that casino claims were rejected as a whole because the industry's revenue was for the most part up this summer. Casino revenue does not guarantee tips, the primary income source for many employees. They say contract workers for BP and day-trippers replaced tourists -- who tip better but feared traveling here from other states because of perceptions about oil pollution.

Casino employees are hoping their claims will be re-examined through an interim claims process, in place now that emergency-claim payments have ended.

The interim process allows claims to be submitted quarterly to cover losses already suffered.

The first quarterly claims period ends Dec. 31.

Claimants must file new applications for the quarterly payments. Attorney General Jim Hood sent Mulvey a letter Monday about the casino-worker claims.

The letter said, in part: "I appreciate that the GCCF has admitted its mistake in assessing casino worker claims as a whole based solely on reports of overall casino gross revenues, an inaccurate indicator of employee revenues. However, I find it unacceptable that the GCCF has refused to correct the error by re-evaluating these claims on its own initiative without the need for the claimants to submit new claim forms.

"I am requesting that the GCCF reconsider its handling of casino worker claims and immediately institute a re-evaluation process to restore some amount of fair treatment to this group of oil-spill victims."

Casino dealer Brad McDonald has been in touch with Hood's office and with GCCF. McDonald, who attended Tuesday's rally, believes casino employees have finally been heard and will have better luck with their interim claims.

"I'm confident that the claims will be paid," he said. "Somebody made a sad mistake to deny all our claims in the first place."

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