

Casino workers previously denied may get oil funds - Anchorage Daily News

Written by Administrator

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BILOXI, Miss. (AP) - The agency in charge of paying Gulf of Mexico oil spill claims is requesting information from casinos that could lead to payments to hundreds of gambling employees previously denied damage claims, the head of an industry trade group says.

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Beverly Martin, executive director of the Coast Casino Operators Association, told The Sun Herald that she talked Thursday with Bill Mulvey, an attorney appointed by the Gulf Coast Claims Facility as liaison to the casinos.

"He told me he realized the frustration level the casino employees are at and (the agency) welcomes the opportunity to make things right," Martin said.

Residents and businesses who have filed emergency claims, including casino employees, should be receiving letters over the next week that outline their options. To have their claims considered, Martin said, they will need to fill out a form that comes with the letter.

State Rep. Bobby Moak also said he talked to Mulvey for about 20 minutes Thursday. Moak said he also believes the claims facility has changed its attitude about casino workers' claims.

"He assured me that they were now going to go back and look at the claims in a different light," Moak said.

At Mulvey's request, Martin said she will ask casino operators to come up with standards to show what tips would have been without the oil spill. Those standards would then be used to adjust the employee claims.

Attorney Kenneth Feinberg, who oversees the claims fund, said each claim, including those from casinos, was examined on its merits. But casino employees, Attorney General Jim Hood, Moak and others believe the employee claims were rejected because casino revenue generally was up while oil gushed into the Gulf.

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Martin has said that casino revenue does not necessarily track with the tips relied on by bartenders, waitresses, bell hops, valets, dealers and other casino employees. Employees said day-trippers and BP cleanup workers who tipped poorly replaced their customary clientele, who stayed away because they feared air and water pollution from the oil.

Millions of gallons of oil spewed into the Gulf of Mexico - and washed up along the coast - after a rig leased by BP PLC exploded in April, killing 11 workers.

Information from: The Sun Herald, <http://www.sunherald.com>

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