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UFA REACTS TO KNOWLES' EXXON PROPOSAL: "IT IS A CRUEL HOAX!!"

Today the United Fishermen of Alaska ("UFA") characterized Tony Knowles' recently proposed federal legislation, "Justice for Alaska Fishing Families" Act, as a disingenuous and misguided effort to gain the support of commercial fishermen impacted by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill. In 1994 an Anchorage jury awarded fishermen and others impacted by the spill \$5 billion. According to a Knowles' press release, his proposal would require Exxon to place that amount in escrow thereby removing an incentive to delay a final settlement.

UFA member, Jerry McCune, of Cordova, who has been involved in Exxon since day one was highly critical of the proposal. "The proposal offers no specifics, disregards existing law, would likely extend the lawsuit, not end it sooner, and was cobbled together without any input from the people he is purporting to help. This is an unvarnished attempt to play upon the emotions and financial insecurities of Alaska's hard working fishing families," said Mr. McCune.

"It seems ironic that our ex-Governor, who had eight years to focus on an Exxon solution, now comes forward with an eleventh hour plan" said UFA President Bob Thorstenson. Thorstenson also noted that the Knowles administration spent hundreds of millions of dollars of Exxon settlement money on questionable "environmental" projects that could have been better used to help secure real "justice for Alaska's fishing families".

"What did Tony Knowles ever do for Alaska's fishermen? Rather than engaging in last minute politicking, Knowles should take a page from Senator Lisa Murkowski who has championed real time legislation and programs for our fishing industry," said Chip Treinen, UFA board member. "Senator Murkowski has taken the lead on various initiatives for the fishing community including USDA seafood purchases, seafood labeling, and federal trade adjustment assistance for Alaska salmon fishermen, who are reeling from foreign farmed salmon."

“UFA and its 35 member affiliates endorsed Senator Lisa Murkowski early on in this race, partly because of her hard work and partly because of her honesty. We are even more solidly behind her now that Tony Knowles has attempted to mislead Alaska’s coastal communities and fishermen with more hallow promises,” added Thorstenson.

Thorstenson when on to add, “Fishermen are no longer surprised by Tony Knowles’ campaign year gimmicks. We’ve seen him do this before. Here he is clearly attempting to shift the focus from his support for the Pew report, which fishermen oppose, with something equally as disingenuous: a sham plan that will do nothing to expedite payment of Exxon’s money.”

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