



Representative Beth Kerttula

Sponsor Statement

### **House Joint Resolution 32: Exxon Valdez Damage Claims**

This resolution urges Exxon Corporation to cease its ongoing legal actions and to promptly pay all claimants the punitive damages owed as a result of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Numerous legal skirmishes have occurred in the decade since the spill. On May 3, 1999, Exxon Corporation's appeal of the 1994 jury verdict on punitive damages was heard by the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. The corporation continues to argue that the punitive damage award is excessive and unwarranted, and has said it will carry the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, if necessary. The resolution does not debate the legal issues; rather it encourages Exxon to stop fighting the judgment.

It is time for Exxon – a hugely profitable U.S. corporation -- to settle its debt with the thousands of Alaskans and others who suffered in the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. It is time to truly begin to close this painful chapter in Alaska's oil history. While the awards may not heal all the Exxon Valdez wounds, the payments will help individuals and families as they still struggle today to rebuild their livelihoods and communities. It is important to recognize the missed opportunities for economic recovery experienced by the plaintiffs who still wait nearly five years after the jury verdict and ten years after the oil spill.

I urge your support for HJR 32.