

ALASKA LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE FILES, 2003-2004 8672

11188 SENATE JUDICIARY

# **REPRESENTATIVE RALPH SAMUELS**

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HOUSE DISTRICT 29

## **House Bill 214 Sponsor Statement**

**“An Act relating to the recovery of punitive damages against an employer who is determined to be vicariously liable for the act or omission of an employee; and providing for an effective date.”**

House Bill 214 changes the standard under which employers must pay for punitive damages assessed against their employees. The standard is changed from strict liability to one that is more fault-based. Essentially, the bill stipulates that unless an employer authorized the act that caused the damages, or acted recklessly or knowingly in approving of the act after it occurred, or the employee is of such a high rank that he or she is essentially the employer, then the employee's punitive damages should not be awarded against the employer.

For example, if a construction worker causes an accident while driving a company vehicle after completing a company safety-training program and violates the policies implemented by the employer, the employer shall not be required to pay the punitive damages assessed against the employee. If the employer released the vehicle to the construction worker knowing that the employee had no safety training regarding the vehicle, the employer may be responsible for the damages because the employer may have been at fault for not properly training the employee.

HB 214 does not absolve businesses and employers from creating and maintaining a safe environment with strict codes for training and employing staff; it protects the employer from damages incurred by an employee that acted recklessly or outrageously on his or her own volition without contribution by the employer. If an employer has taken all of the necessary steps to ensure its' employees act safely and properly, the employer should not have to pay for the punitive damages incurred by the employee.

The employer will, however, continue to be vicariously liable for the compensatory damages arising from its employees' conduct. In addition, the employer will continue to be liable for punitive damages assessed directly against the employer because of its' own conduct.

Email: [Representative\\_Ralph\\_Samuels@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Ralph_Samuels@legis.state.ak.us)

Session: Alaska State Capitol, Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182 • Phone: (907) 465-2095 Fax: (907) 465-3810  
Interim: 716 W. 4th Ave., Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2133 • Phone: (907) 269-0240 Fax: (907) 269-0242



# REPRESENTATIVE RALPH SAMUELS

HOUSE DISTRICT 29

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HB 214 does not absolve businesses and employers from creating and maintaining a safe environment with strict codes for training and employing staff; it protects the employer from damages incurred by an employee that acted recklessly or outrageously on his or her own volition without contribution by the employer. If an employer has taken all of the necessary steps to ensure its' employees act safely and properly, the employer should not have to pay for the punitive damages incurred by the employee.

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# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2003 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: 1  
 Bill Version: CSHB 214(JUD)  
 (H) Publish Date: 4/4/03

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Affected: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title Punitive damages against employers BRU Alaska Court System  
 Component Trial Courts  
 Sponsor Representative Samuels  
 Requester House Judiciary Component No. 768

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
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<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>						
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**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2003) cost: 0.0  
 Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2004 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

The court system does not anticipate any fiscal impact from the passage of HB 214.

Prepared by: Douglas Wooliver, Administrative Attorney Phone 463-4750  
 Division Alaska Court System Date/Time 3/28/03 10:27 AM  
 Approved by: Stephanie Cole, Administrative Director Date 3/28/2003  
 Agency Alaska Court System

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2003 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: 2  
 Bill Version: CSHB 214(JUD)  
 (H) Publish Date: 4/4/03

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Affected: Law  
 Title "An Act relating to the recovery of punitive BRU Civil Division  
damages against an employer . . ." Component Governmental Affairs  
 Sponsor Representative Samuels Special Litigation  
 Requester House Judiciary Component No. 2207; 2213

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type-Do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2003) cost: 0.0  
 Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2004 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)  
 This bill would limit when an employer who is held liable in a civil action for an act or omission of an employee could be required to pay punitive damages.  
  
 The State of Alaska as an employer is immune from punitive damages under AS 09.50.280. This bill will have no fiscal impact on the Department of Law.

Prepared by: Joan M. Kasson Phone (907) 465-5370  
 Division Attorney General's Office Date/Time 3/28/03 2:45 PM  
 Approved by: Joan M. Kasson for Gregg D. Renkes, Attorney General Date 3/28/2003  
 Agency Department of Law

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**ALASKA TRUCKING ASSOCIATION, INC.**3443 Minnesota Drive • Anchorage, Alaska 99503 • PHONE (907) 276-1149 • FAX (907) 274-1946

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March 28, 2003

Representative Ralph Samuels  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

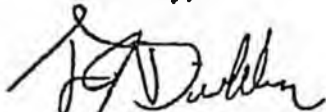
Dear Representative Samuels:

The Alaska Trucking Association membership which consists of over 300 transportation companies in Alaska understands the importance of the justice system, and the direct effect it can have on business. ATA feels that House Bill 214 will re-emphasize the importance and equality of the system.

Frequently punitive damages are placed on companies that had no direct influence in the actions take by their employees. These damages are assessed because there is a presumption that the company had acted recklessly. House Bill 214 offers some clarity in addressing the issue by stating that an employer who never approved or authorized an act resulting in wrongdoing is not held vicariously responsible for the employee, this meets the purpose of the current Alaska law covering punitive damages.

Alaska Trucking Association supports HB 214 in its current form.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Dillon  
Executive Vice President



Headquarters:  
217 2nd Street, Suite 201  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
(907) 586-2323 FAX 463-5515

Regional Office:  
601 West 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 600  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
(907) 278-2722 FAX 278-6643



March 28, 2003

Representative Raiph Samuels  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Representative Samuels:

The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce, representing approximately 700 business members and local chambers of commerce throughout the state, supports fairness in the civil justice system. House Bill 214 brings a greater degree of fairness to the system.

Punitive damages are intended to punish wrongdoers who, through outrageous conduct and acts done with malice or reckless indifference, have harmed or caused loss to the interests of another. HB 214, in establishing that an employer who neither authorized nor approved an act of wrongdoing is not to be held vicariously responsible for the act of an employee, fulfills the intent of the present Alaska law regarding punitive damages.

We support the passage of HB214 as it has been introduced.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pamela La Bolle".

Pamela La Bolle  
President



April 3, 2003

6441 South Airpark Place  
Anchorage, Alaska 99502-1809  
(907) 245-1544  
Fax: (907) 245-1744

Representative Ralph Samuels  
Alaska State Legislature  
Pouch V  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Samuels:

This is a letter of support for House Bill 214, which clarifies the liability of employers for the actions of non managerial employees.

Recent court decisions have found employers liable for punitive damages in cases where employees violated clear company policies and procedures without the knowledge of the employer or supervisor.

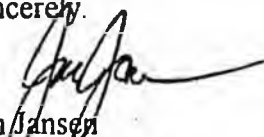
Your bill clarifies state law by stating the specific conditions under which the employer has potential liability for punitive damages. Where those conditions do not exist, the employer would not be liable.

This clear and common sense approach to punitive damages will be very helpful to companies such as Lynden, which has solid administrative procedures in place to try to prevent any such actions by employees which may cause damage or injuries to others. It should help to reduce our insurance costs by limiting one major avenue for plaintiff attorneys to pressure firms into higher settlements or limiting our exposure to unwarranted jury verdicts.

I understand that the State of Alaska is immune from such punitive damages if one of its employees violates State policies and causes damage or injury to others. If it is good for the State of Alaska, it should be good for Alaskan businesses.

Thank you for sponsoring this legislation.

Sincerely,



Jim Jansen  
President & CEO



## ALASKA STATE HOMEBUILDERS ASSOCIATION

April 8, 2003

The Honorable Ralph Samuels  
Alaska State House of Representatives  
State Capitol Building  
Juneau, Alaska

IN RE: Letter of Support for HB214

Dear Representative Samuels:

Thank you for your sponsorship of HB214, relating to the recovery of punitive damages against an employer.

Over the past year, insurance rates for liability coverage have risen dramatically. The number of insurance companies in Alaska that provide liability coverage is becoming scarce.

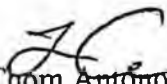
The Alaska State Home Building Association (ASHBA) has worked in conjunction with the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) to enact legislation in all the states regarding insurance availability and affordability. In spite of current economic conditions and litigation risks, insurance coverage is a vital component of providing protections that benefit employers, employees, and their customers.

HB 214 changes the standard under which employers must pay for punitive damages assessed against their employees. For example, if an employee caused an accident while driving a company vehicle, the employer shall not be required to pay punitive damages awarded to the victim. This is reliant upon the employer providing safety-training, risk-management programs, and establishing appropriate employment policies.

Incentives for safety-training and other risk management programs should be encouraged as matters of public policy.

ASHBA currently is advocating passage of HB151, the Right to Repair legislation sponsored by Rep. Kevin Meyers. Its intent is very similar to HB214.

Sincerely,

  
Thom Antonovich, President  
Alaska State Home Building Association



8301 SCHOON ST • SUITE 200 • ANCHORAGE, ALASKA • 99518  
(907) 522-3931 • FAX (907) 522-3757

Restatement of the Law -- Agency  
Restatement of the Law Second -- Agency  
Current through June 2002

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Chapter 7. Liability Of Principal To Third Person; Torts  
Topic 2. Liability For Authorized Conduct Or Conduct Incidental Thereto  
Title A. In General

§ 217C. Punitive Damages

[Link to Case Citations](#)

Punitive damages can properly be awarded against a master or other principal because of an act by an agent if, but only if:

- (a) the principal authorized the doing and the manner of the act, or
- (b) the agent was unfit and the principal was reckless in employing him, or
- (c) the agent was employed in a managerial capacity and was acting in the scope of employment, or
- (d) the principal or a managerial agent of the principal ratified or approved the act.

Comment:

*a.* The circumstances under which punitive damages can properly be awarded are stated in the Restatement of Torts, Section 908. The following Section (§ 909) states the rules as to the liability of an employer. This Section is taken from Section 909, to which reference is made for comment and illustrations. The cases are divided; some courts impose liability upon a master for unauthorized wanton acts of servants who are not managers; others do not.

*b.* Mere failure to dismiss a servant, unaccompanied by conduct indicating approval of the wrongful conduct, is not a sufficient basis on which to impose punitive damages.

*c.* The rule stated in this Section does not apply to the interpretation of special statutes such as those giving triple damages, as to which no statement is made.

Restatement of the Law -- Torts  
Restatement of the Law Second -- Torts  
Current through June 2002

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Division 13. Remedies  
Chapter 47. Damages  
Topic 1. General Statements

§ 909. Punitive Damages Against A Principal

[Link to Case Citations](#)

Punitive damages can properly be awarded against a master or other principal because of an act by an agent if, but only if,

- (a) the principal or a managerial agent authorized the doing and the manner of the act, or
- (b) the agent was unfit and the principal or a managerial agent was reckless in employing or retaining him, or
- (c) the agent was employed in a managerial capacity and was acting in the scope of employment, or
- (d) the principal or a managerial agent of the principal ratified or approved the act.

**Comment:**

*a.* This Section is duplicated by § 217C of the Restatement, Second, of Agency, which refers to this Section for comment and illustrations.

*b.* The rule stated in this Section results from the reasons for awarding punitive damages, which make it improper ordinarily to award punitive damages against one who himself is personally innocent and therefore liable only vicariously. It is, however, within the general spirit of the rule to make liable an employer who has recklessly employed or retained a servant or employee who was known to be vicious, if the harm resulted from that characteristic. (See Illustration 1). Nor is it unjust that a person on whose account another has acted should be responsible for an outrageous act for which he otherwise would not be if, with full knowledge of the act and the way in which it was done, he ratifies it, or, in cases in which he would be liable for the act but not subject to punitive damages, he expresses approval of it. (See Illustration 2). In these cases, punitive damages are granted primarily because of the principal's own wrongful conduct.

Although there has been no fault on the part of a corporation or other employer, if a person acting in a managerial capacity either does an outrageous act or approves of the act by a subordinate, the imposition of punitive damages upon the employer serves as a deterrent to the employment of unfit persons for important positions. (See Illustration 3).

**Illustrations:**

1. A employs an ejection company to dispossess a tenant. A knows that the company has a reputation for using undue force in dealing with tenants. An employee of the company, in accordance with its usual methods, commits an unprovoked battery upon B, the wife of the tenant, in order to induce her to leave. In an action by B against A, punitive damages can properly be awarded.
2. A, the owner of a theatre, employs a special policeman to keep order. In ejecting a small boy from the theatre, the policeman cruelly abuses him. Upon learning the facts, A expresses his approval. Punitive damages can properly be awarded against A in an action for the battery.
3. A, a corporation owning a series of retail stores, employs B as operations manager to supervise the management of the units. While visiting a unit B discovers facts

REST 2d TORTS S 909

that lead him to believe erroneously that one of the clerks has been stealing. He directs the local manager to imprison the clerk. In the ensuing interview he permits the local manager to use outrageous means of intimidation. In the clerk's action against the corporation, punitive damages can properly be awarded.

**Laidlaw Transit, Inc. v. Crouse (8/30/2002) sp-5619**

Notice: This opinion is subject to correction before publication in the Pacific Reporter. Readers are requested to bring errors to the attention of the Clerk of the Appellate Courts, 303 K Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99501, phone (907) 264-0608, fax (907) 264-0878, e-mail corrections@appellate.courts.state.ak.us.

THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

LIDLAW TRANSIT, INC.,	)	
	)	Supreme Court No. S-9850/9869
Appellant and	)	
Cross-Appellee,	)	
	)	Superior Court No.
v.	)	3AN-94-10301 CI
	)	
GAIL CROUSE, for and on behalf of )	)	
her daughter, SHAWN CROUSE, )	)	
a minor,	)	O P I N I O N
	)	
Appellee and	)	
Cross-Appellant.	)	[No. 5619 - August 30, 2002]
	)	

Appeal from the Superior Court of the State of Alaska, Third Judicial District, Anchorage, Sen K. Tan, Judge.

Appearances: Thomas A. Matthews, Thomas L. Hause, Matthews & Zahare, P.C., Anchorage, for Appellant/Cross-Appellee. Don C. Bauermeister, Burke & Bauermeister, P.L.L.C., Anchorage, for Appellee/Cross-Appellant.

Before: Fabe, Chief Justice, Matthews, Eastaugh, Bryner, and Carpeneti, Justices.

BRYNER, Justice.

I. INTRODUCTION

I. A school bus ran off the roadway and rolled over, injuring passenger Shawn Crouse. Shawns mother sued the bus driver and the drivers employer, Laidlaw Transit, Inc.; a jury awarded Crouse \$19,259 in compensatory damages and \$3.5 million in punitive damages. The trial court remitted the punitive award to \$500,000 and entered judgment for Crouse. Laidlaw appeals, challenging the punitive award and disputing several evidentiary rulings. Crouse cross-appeals, questioning the trial courts remittitur. We affirm, concluding that the trial court correctly found Laidlaw vicariously liable for punitive damages, did not err in its evidentiary rulings, and did not abuse its discretion in its remittitur.

II. FACTS AND PROCEEDINGS

On November 24, 1992, a school bus driven by Dawn Finitz, a Laidlaw employee, slid off an icy road and rolled over. Shawn Crouse, a bus passenger, suffered minor injuries. In keeping with its drug policy, Laidlaw gave Finitz a post-accident drug test, which revealed that Finitzs blood contained trace amounts of marijuana.

Shawns mother, Gail Crouse, filed a complaint on behalf of her daughter against Finitz and Laidlaw for compensatory and punitive damages, alleging that Finitz recklessly caused the accident. Crouse claimed that Laidlaw was both vicariously liable for Finitzs conduct because the conduct occurred within the course and scope of Finitzs employment and directly liable because Laidlaw negligently or recklessly hired and/or supervised Finitz that it knew or should have known that Finitz was likely to drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In its answer, Laidlaw admitted liability for the accident and confirmed that Finitz tested positive for marijuana. As a result, the only issues for trial were the amount of compensatory damages, whether Finitzs or Laidlaws conduct was sufficiently outrageous to warrant a punitive damages award, and if so, the amount of that award.

Laidlaw subsequently filed a motion for summary judgment on its liability for punitive damages. The superior court concluded that Laidlaw could not be held directly liable for punitive damages because it had not acted outrageously in hiring and supervising Finitz. But the court ruled that Laidlaw could be held vicariously liable for Finitzs conduct because her actions fell within the course and scope of her employment.

Laidlaw also filed several pretrial motions seeking to exclude certain evidence, including all reference to Finitzs drug use; all evidence of Laidlaws financial resources; the testimony of Crouses expert witness, Forest S. Tennant, Jr., M.D.; and all evidence of Laidlaws conduct. The trial court partially granted the motion to exclude evidence of Laidlaws conduct, precluding evidence of alcohol and controlled substance abuse by Laidlaw drivers other than Finitz. The court denied Laidlaws other pretrial motions.

The trial consisted of two phases: the first addressed liability and compensatory damages; the second addressed punitive damages. In the first phase, the jury awarded Crouse \$19,259 in compensatory damages and found that Finitz acted sufficiently outrageously to justify an award of punitive damages; in the second phase it awarded \$3.5 million in punitive damages.

Laidlaw filed a motion for remittitur, which the trial court granted. Analyzing the punitive damages award in light of the factors in *Norcon, Inc. v. Kotowski*,<sup>1</sup> the trial court concluded that the maximum justifiable award was only \$375,000. Crouse moved to reconsider; the trial court granted the motion and increased the punitive damages award to \$500,000.

Laidlaw appeals; Crouse cross-appeals.

### III. DISCUSSION

#### A. Standard of Review

A. On appeal, Laidlaw challenges the trial courts summary judgment ruling that it was vicariously liable for punitive damages and also disputes a number of the courts evidentiary rulings. We review grants of summary judgment de novo and will affirm if there are no genuine issues of material fact . . . .<sup>2</sup> A trial courts decision regarding the admissibility of evidence, including expert testimony, is generally reviewed for abuse of discretion;<sup>3</sup> but when admissibility turns on a question of law, we apply our independent judgment.<sup>4</sup>

On cross-appeal, Crouse challenges the trial courts remittitur of the punitive damages award from \$3.5 million to \$500,000. We review a trial courts grant of remittitur for abuse

of discretion. To reverse, we must be left with a definite and firm conviction that the trial court erred in granting the remittitur.<sup>5</sup>

#### B. Laidlaw's Vicarious Liability for Punitive Damages

In partially denying Laidlaw's summary judgment motion, the trial court ruled that Finitz acted within the course and scope of her employment and, so, if the jury found her conduct sufficiently outrageous to justify an award of punitive damages against Finitz, Laidlaw would be vicariously liable. Laidlaw challenges that ruling.

1. Laidlaw failed to preserve its argument that this court should adopt the complicity rule.

In *Alaskan Village, Inc. v. Smalley*, we adopted the so-called course of employment rule for determining when an employer is vicariously liable for punitive damages arising out of its employees' conduct.<sup>6</sup> Under this rule, an employer is vicariously liable, regardless of the employee's rank, so long as the employee was acting within the course and scope of employment.<sup>7</sup>

On appeal, Laidlaw urges us to follow a different standard, the complicity rule, which requires at least some degree of employer complicity before vicarious liability attaches for punitive damages arising from the conduct of a non-supervisory employee.<sup>8</sup> But Laidlaw did not raise this argument at the trial court level. Because Laidlaw failed to preserve the argument for appeal, we decline to consider overruling *Alaskan Village* or adopting the complicity rule.<sup>9</sup>

2. The trial court did not err in applying the course of employment rule.

Laidlaw next argues that the trial court erred in applying the course of employment rule by deciding as a matter of law that Finitz had acted within the course and scope of her employment. Because Finitz did not smoke marijuana to serve Laidlaw and because Laidlaw's drug policy specifically prohibited drug use, Laidlaw contends, Finitz's conduct could not have been within the scope of her employment.

But the conduct giving rise to the punitive damages award was not Finitz's act of smoking marijuana; it was her act of driving children in a school bus while she was impaired by marijuana.<sup>10</sup> The issue, then, is whether the trial court erred by concluding that Finitz's act of driving the school bus while under the influence of marijuana fell within the course and scope of her employment.

This court does not follow a rigid rule for determining when tortious conduct occurs within the scope of employment; rather, we apply a flexible, multi-factored test.<sup>11</sup> We have generally looked to the various factors in the Restatement (Second) of Agency 228 as relevant considerations, though not prerequisites, to determine whether an employer should be held responsible for an employee's acts.<sup>12</sup> The Restatement (Second) of Agency 228 provides:

(1) Conduct of a servant is within the scope of employment if, but only if:

(a) it is of the kind he is employed to perform;

(b) it occurs substantially within the authorized time and space limits;

(c) it is actuated, at least in part, by a purpose to serve the master, and

(d) if force is intentionally used by the servant against another, the use of force is not unexpected by the master.

(2) Conduct of a servant is not within the scope of employment if it is different in kind from that authorized, far beyond the authorized time or space limits, or too little actuated by a purpose to serve the master.

Applying these factors to this case, we conclude that the trial court properly found as a matter of law that Finitz's outrageous conduct occurred in the course and scope of her employment. First, Finitz had specifically been employed to drive a school bus. That she performed this activity while under the effects of marijuana does not mean that she acted outside the scope of her employment; instead, it demonstrates the recklessness with which she performed her assigned task.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the fact that Laidlaw policy explicitly prohibits smoking marijuana does not insulate the company from liability: A wrongful act committed by an employee while acting in his employers business does not take the employee out of the scope of employment, even if the employer has expressly forbidden the act.<sup>14</sup>

Second, the disputed conduct occurred within the time and space limits of Finitz's employment. Finitz drove under the influence of marijuana while on her usual morning route.

Finally, even though Finitz acted recklessly in driving the bus, she nonetheless acted, at least in part, to serve Laidlaw. In *Doe v. Samaritan Counseling Center*, we held that where tortious conduct arises out of and is reasonably incidental to the employee's legitimate work activities, the motivation to serve test will have been satisfied.<sup>15</sup> Here the conduct at issue driving while impaired by marijuana both arose out of and was incidental to Finitz's legitimate work activities because it carried out the very function that Finitz was hired to perform driving a school bus. We thus affirm the superior court's decision.

### C. Evidentiary Issues

1. The trial court did not err by admitting evidence regarding Laidlaw's failure to locate a driver named Mike. During the trial's liability phase, Crouse introduced evidence over Laidlaw's objection that Laidlaw had failed to identify and locate a Laidlaw driver who was known to Finitz only as Mike. Finitz asserted that she and Mike had previously smoked marijuana together. On appeal, Laidlaw claims that whether it ever found Mike was irrelevant to whether Finitz's marijuana use impaired her driving on the day of the accident. Moreover, Laidlaw points out, the trial court had previously ruled that evidence concerning drug and alcohol use by Laidlaw drivers other than Finitz was irrelevant and thus inadmissible.

Laidlaw adopted the theory at trial that Finitz was merely an occasional, recreational marijuana user and that the jury could therefore believe her assertion that she had not smoked marijuana on the day of the accident. This theory was based in large part on Finitz's testimony that while she was working for Laidlaw she smoked marijuana [v]ery irregularly, very seldom. Given Laidlaw's affirmative reliance on the theory that Finitz was a recreational user, Crouse obviously had a legitimate interest in locating witnesses who were familiar with Finitz's drug use and might be able to shed light on the credibility of her testimony.

During pretrial discovery and at trial, Finitz named only two people with whom she had smoked marijuana in the past: Cora, a resident in Finitz's apartment complex, and Mike. She

could not recall either Coras or Mikes last names. As Crouse points out, [p]laintiff repeatedly sought through discovery identifying information about Cora and Mike because these were the only witnesses [Finitz] could even recall the first name of who had knowledge of her claimed recreational marijuana use. Because Cora had moved and was no longer in contact with Finitz, the only way Crouse could verify Finitz's testimony on this point was through Mike. But Laidlaw failed to locate Mike, claiming that, despite an extensive inquiry, it had failed to find anyone named Mike who worked as a Laidlaw driver in Eagle River at the time of the accident.

By establishing Laidlaw's failure to locate Mike and questioning the reasonableness of Laidlaw's efforts, Crouse legitimately sought to demonstrate not only the absence of anyone who could corroborate Finitz's claim of merely occasional drug use, but also that Laidlaw might have been less than diligent in uncovering evidence that could contradict its recreational user theory. Because the disputed evidence had at least some legitimate tendency to refute Laidlaw's theory of defense, we reject Laidlaw's claim of irrelevance and conclude that the trial court did not abuse its discretion in admitting the evidence.

2. The trial court did not err by refusing to give a cautionary instruction after Crouse's closing argument.

Laidlaw claims that even if we find that the trial court properly admitted the evidence concerning Mike, it nonetheless erred by failing to give a cautionary instruction after Crouse referred to this evidence during closing arguments. In closing argument, Crouse's attorney stated,

But Laidlaw not finding out who Mike was is detestable. Its one of their drivers, he's smoking marijuana with this driver.

....  
We're going to ask you to say Laidlaw shouldn't be using drivers like Mike. Now you've never seen Mike and I've never seen Mike, and Mike might still be driving, for all of us know. If you do nothing in this case, you do nothing, then tomorrow morning, when that bus pulls up and those doors open, and a child looks up those big stairs and climbs into the bus, Mike may well be behind that steering wheel. And that's who you're going to leave there. And if you think this is okay, then you say no to these questions. But if you're worried about that child and you're worried about this type of conduct, then your answers have to be yes in this action. And that's the biggest decision you're going to make in this case.

Following these statements, Laidlaw requested a cautionary instruction to explain that Laidlaw's conduct was irrelevant. The trial court denied this request, reasoning that the argument was relevant to the issue of deterrence. We agree with the trial court's conclusion. Jury instruction 18 stated:

The Plaintiff has also requested that you find Defendant, Dawn Finitz, liable for punitive damages in order to punish her and to deter her and others from repeating similar acts. Laidlaw did not object to this instruction. As we have stated on other occasions, the purpose of punitive damages is to punish the wrongdoer and prevent similar conduct in the future.<sup>16</sup> The argument at issue was based on evidence presented at trial, conformed to the jury instructions, and was aimed at convincing the jury of the need to deter other drivers and employers who were similarly situated to Finitz and Laidlaw. We conclude that the trial court did not err in refusing Laidlaw's request for a cautionary instruction.

3. The trial court did not err by admitting evidence of Laidlaws wealth.

The trial court denied Laidlaws pretrial motion to exclude all evidence of the company's financial resources, reasoning that Laidlaws financial wealth was relevant to the punitive damages question. Laidlaw challenges this ruling, arguing that evidence of corporate wealth is irrelevant when, as here, a company commits no direct wrong but is subject to punitive damages solely on the theory that it is vicariously liable for acts of a non-managerial employee. Except perhaps in situations involving managerial employees, Laidlaw reasons, a vicariously liable employer is not a wrongdoer, and financial evidence therefore must be limited to the employees resources.

We have previously recognized that a defendants wealth is usually relevant to the issue of punitive damages.<sup>17</sup> But we have not yet considered the narrower issue raised here: whether a corporate employers financial resources are relevant to punitive damages when the employer is only vicariously liable for an employees conduct. The rationale behind the course of employment rule we adopted in *Alaskan Village v. Smalley* requires an affirmative answer.<sup>18</sup>

The course of employment rule holds corporate employers vicariously liable for punitive damages on the theory that corporations can act only through their employees and agents; hence, when employees act in the course of employment, their acts are indistinguishable from corporate actions. An early opinion of the Maine Supreme Court exemplifies this theory:

A corporation is an imaginary being. It has no mind but the mind of its servants; it has no voice but the voice of its servants; and it has no hands with which to act but the hands of its servants. All its schemes of mischief, as well as its schemes of public enterprise, are conceived by human minds and executed by human hands; and these minds and hands are its servants minds and hands. All attempts, therefore, to distinguish between the guilt of the servant and the guilt of the corporation; or the malice of the servant and the malice of the corporation; or the punishment of the servant and the punishment of the corporation, is sheer nonsense.[19]

Under the course of employment rule, then, an employee acting within the course and scope of employment essentially is a corporate actor; and when the employee acts wrongfully, the corporation becomes the wrongdoer: [T]he tortious act of the servant done in the course of his employment is ordinarily the legal act of the master, and in this sense, the employer is not free of fault. <sup>20</sup> Because the law treats the employer and employee alike as wrongdoers, it is proper for the jury to consider what amount of punitive damages will suffice to punish and motivate the vicariously liable employer; as other jurisdictions have held in applying the course of employment rule, evidence of the employers financial wealth is relevant and admissible in these circumstances.<sup>21</sup> The trial court did not abuse its discretion in admitting evidence of Laidlaws financial wealth.

4. The trial court did not err by admitting the testimony of Dr. Tennant.

Laidlaw next contends that the trial court erred in allowing Crouses medical expert witness, Dr. Forest Tennant, to state his opinion that, at the time of the accident, Finitz was under the influence of marijuana she had smoked earlier the same morning. But Laidlaw did not object to the challenged testimony and therefore failed to preserve this issue for appeal.<sup>22</sup>

Laidlaw did file a pretrial motion to prevent Dr. Tennant from expressing his expert opinion concerning a different theory of impairment: that Finitz was a long-term, heavy user of

marijuana; that such use can cause residual physiological effects; and that Finitz driving was probably impaired by these residual effects on the morning of the accident. But despite the trial courts pretrial ruling allowing testimony on this theory of impairment, Dr. Tennant did not rely on the theory at trial. He testified instead that, in his opinion, Finitz had likely smoked marijuana on the morning of the accident and was impaired by the effects of that morning's consumption.

Laidlaw voiced no objection to this testimony, instead choosing to cross-examine Dr. Tennant about his reasons for failing to mention this theory earlier. The doctor had acknowledged that he had just reached his conclusion the night before testifying, after examining emergency room records that he had not previously reviewed and that disclosed Finitz's post-accident pulse rate and blood pressure. According to Dr. Tennant, this information enabled him to form his new opinion; before seeing the emergency room records, he had relied on information indicating that Finitz's most recent marijuana use had occurred at least several days before the accident.

As can be seen, Dr. Tennant's trial testimony addressed a different theory than the theory he developed during pretrial discovery, and the new testimony obviously fell outside the scope of both Laidlaw's pretrial motion to preclude Dr. Tennant's expert testimony concerning residual effects and the superior court's pretrial order denying that motion.<sup>23</sup> The record provides no basis, then, for concluding that the court had already ruled the new line of testimony admissible or that a contemporaneous objection would have been futile. Given these circumstances, Laidlaw cannot reasonably rely on its pretrial motion as a timely objection; nor can it plausibly invoke the superior court's pretrial ruling as an excuse for failing to make a contemporaneous objection.

5. The trial court did not err by admitting evidence of Finitz's general drug habit.

Laidlaw argues that the trial court erred in admitting evidence of Finitz's general drug use, particularly certain post-accident treatment records from the Alaska Women's Resource Center indicating that Finitz had used marijuana on a daily basis. Laidlaw insists that evidence of Finitz's general drug use was inadmissible because Crouse presented no admissible evidence tending to prove that Finitz was actually impaired by drugs at the time of the accident.<sup>24</sup>

But as explained above, Dr. Tennant testified that Finitz was impaired by marijuana when the accident occurred. The challenged treatment records directly supported this testimony: they reflected Finitz's own admissions that she engaged in daily marijuana use around the time the accident occurred. The Center's client intake form states that Finitz had been taking 6 hits of marijuana twice a day. Because Finitz's admission of daily use had case-specific relevance by discrediting her claim of occasional recreational use and by indicating that she smoked marijuana on the day she drove the school bus off the road, we find no error in failing to exclude the records as general propensity evidence.

D. The Trial Court Did Not Abuse Its Discretion by Ordering a Remittitur of the Punitive Damages Award.

On cross-appeal, Crouse challenges the trial court's remittitur of the punitive damages award from \$3.5 million to \$500,000. A trial court may remit a jury's punitive damages award as excessive when the court determines that the award is manifestly unreasonable; factors relevant to this determination include the compensatory damage amount, magnitude of the offense, importance of the policy violated, and the defendant's wealth.<sup>25</sup> Also relevant are the nine factors listed in the Model Punitive Damages Act:<sup>26</sup>

- (1) the nature of the defendants wrongful conduct and its effect on the claimant and others;
- (2) the amount of compensatory damages;
- (3) any fines, penalties, damages, or restitution paid or to be paid by the defendant arising from the wrongful conduct;
- (4) the defendants present and future financial condition and the effect of an award on each condition;
- (5) any profit or gain, obtained by the defendant through the wrongful conduct, in excess of that likely to be divested by this and any other actions against the defendant for compensatory damages or restitution;
- (6) any adverse effect of the award on innocent persons;
- (7) any remedial measures taken or not taken by the defendant since the wrongful conduct;
- (8) compliance or noncompliance with any applicable standard promulgated by a governmental or other generally recognized agency or organization whose function is to establish standards; and
- (9) any other aggravating or mitigating factors relevant to the amount of the award.[27]

When a trial court applies these factors and concludes that an award is excessive, the amount remitted should reflect the maximum that the jury could have awarded without being excessive.<sup>28</sup>

The offensive conduct in this case was Finitz's act of driving a school bus off the road while Finitz was impaired by marijuana. In its original order of remittitur, the trial court focused on several relevant factors: (1) the relationship between the punitive and compensatory damages awards; (2) the offenses magnitude; (3) the importance of the policy violated; (4) the defendant's wealth; and (5) any fines, penalties, damages, or restitution paid or to be paid by Laidlaw. While recognizing that Laidlaw had over \$1 billion in annual revenues nationwide, the court emphasized that the jury's award of punitive damages exceeded its award of compensatory damages by 182 times; moreover, the court noted, although Finitz violated a serious policy by driving under the influence of a controlled substance, her wrongful conduct was not especially egregious, consisting of an isolated act that caused only minor injuries. This analysis initially led the court to reduce the jury's \$3.5 million punitive damages award to \$375,000, a figure that, in the court's view, represented the maximum punitive damages award supported by the evidence.

After Crouse moved for reconsideration, the trial court increased the remitted award to \$500,000 based on a reevaluation of two factors: the offenses magnitude and Laidlaw's wealth. In reassessing these factors, the court found Finitz's conduct to be more serious than it originally believed, noting that, despite Shawn Crouse's relatively minor injuries, an out of control school bus, full of school children on an icy road, with an impaired driver posed a very high degree of hazard to the occupants of the school bus and to the public. At the same time, however, the court tempered its original estimate of Laidlaw's corporate wealth, pointing out that, although the company's nationwide annual revenues exceeded \$1 billion, its annual revenues in Alaska totaled only \$5 million. Finding statewide revenues relevant, the court reasoned that a \$3.5 million award might seem de minimis compared to Laidlaw's nationwide revenues but was obviously excessive in relation to the company's Alaska revenues. Because this second factor largely offset the first, the court decided on reconsideration to raise the original remitted award by only a modest amount, to \$500,000.

In challenging the remittitur, Crouses cross-appeal advances three arguments. First, Crouse argues, the remittitur is inconsistent with the trial courts finding on reconsideration that the jury's punitive damages award is de minimis compared to Laidlaws nationwide revenues. But this argument misreads the courts reconsideration decision, which acknowledged Laidlaws nationwide earnings but essentially found the company's much smaller Alaska revenues to be a more realistic point of reference for assessing the excessiveness of the punitive damages verdict. Punitive damages are meant to punish the wrongdoer and to deter similar conduct.<sup>29</sup> Given the localized nature of the misconduct at issue, the limited scope of the resulting harm, and the absence of any direct liability, the trial court did not abuse its discretion in selecting Laidlaws statewide operations as the most appropriate measure to use in determining the need for deterrence and punishment.

Second, Crouse argues that, given the courts findings on reconsideration concerning the magnitude of Finitzs misconduct, its ultimate decision overemphasized the mathematical ratio of punitive damages to compensatory damages a measure that should not alone be dispositive. But again, Crouse misreads the trial courts order on reconsideration. Although the trial courts findings on reconsideration acknowledged that Finitzs misconduct was more serious than the court originally thought, these findings neither said nor suggested that the misconduct was so serious as to support the original \$3.5 million punitive damages verdict. Instead, the courts reconsideration decision simply recognized that the enhanced seriousness of the misconduct supported an award larger than the \$375,000 total that the court had awarded in its original remittitur order. As the trial court specifically noted, even though it originally underestimated the potential hazard posed by Finitzs conduct, the overall seriousness of the misconduct continued to be mitigated by several significant considerations: to a large extent the potential harm from Finitzs conduct did not materialize; Shawn Crouse suffered only minor injuries; and Laidlaw itself neither contributed to Finitzs misconduct nor directly engaged in any other wrongdoing. Moreover, Crouses argument on this point mistakenly posits that the trial courts order on reconsideration found the ratio of punitive to compensatory damages to be the only mitigating factor calling for a remittitur. As already indicated, the court independently emphasized that the income and size of [Laidlaws] Alaska operations must temper [the amount awarded].

Last, Crouse attempts to establish the appropriateness of the jury's punitive damages verdict through a detailed discussion of economic efficiency theory. But Crouse failed to present any evidence at trial supporting this theory, failed to argue the point to the jury or to request supporting instructions, and failed to argue this point before the superior court either in its opposition to Laidlaws motion for remittitur or in its motion for reconsideration. Because a party may not present new issues or advance new theories to secure a reversal of a trial court decision, we decline to consider Crouses economic efficiency theory.<sup>30</sup>

We thus reject Crouses principal claim on cross-appeal, holding that the trial court did not abuse its discretion in ordering a remittitur of the punitive damages award from \$3.5 million to \$500,000.<sup>31</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

We AFFIRM the superior courts final judgment.

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1 971 P.2d 158 (Alaska 1999).

2 Municipality of Anchorage v. Repasky, 34 P.3d 302, 305 (Alaska 2001).

3 Dobos v. Ingersoll, 9 P.3d 1020, 1023 (Alaska 2000) (admissibility of evidence); State v. Coon, 974 P.2d 386, 398 (Alaska 1999) (expert testimony).

4 See Lenders v. Municipality of Anchorage, 915 P.2d 614, 616 n.1 (Alaska 1996).

5 Intl Bhd. of Elec. Workers, Local 1547 v. Alaska Util. Constr., Inc., 976 P.2d 852, 857 (Alaska 1999).

6 720 P.2d 945, 948-49 (Alaska 1986) ([I]f a tort by an employee renders the employer liable for compensatory damages and the employees actions justify a punitive damage award, then the employer is liable for punitive damages, whether or not the employer authorized or ratified the tortious conduct.) (citing with approval the rule adopted by the Oregon Supreme Court in Stroud v. Dennys Rest., Inc., 532 P.2d 790, 793 (Or. 1975)); see also VECO, Inc. v. Rosebrock, 970 P.2d 906, 911 (Alaska 1999) (noting that Alaska case law generally follows the Restatement (Second) of Agency but has eliminated the requirement in subsection (c) that the employee be managerial).

7 See Stroud v. Dennys Rest., Inc., 532 P.2d 790, 792-93 (Or. 1975).

8 The complicity rule is expressed by the Restatement (Second) of Torts 909 (1979) and the nearly identical Restatement (Second) of Agency 217C (1958), which states:

Punitive damages can properly be awarded against a master or other principal because

of an act by an agent if, but only if:

- (a) the principal authorized the doing and the manner of the act, or
- (b) the agent was unfit and the principal was reckless in employing him, or
- (c) the agent was employed in a managerial capacity and was acting within the scope of employment, or
- (d) the principal or a managerial agent of the principal ratified or approved the act.

9 See, e.g., Nenana City Sch. Dist. v. Coghill, 898 P.2d 929, 934 (Alaska 1995) (declining to consider an argument raised for the first time on appeal). Laidlaw suggests that this court recently adopted the complicity rule in VECO, Inc. v. Rosebrock, 970 P.2d 906 (Alaska 1999) a case decided after trial ended in the present case and that the newly created conflict between

VECO and Alaskan Village must be resolved. But Laidlaw misreads VECO, which expressly reaffirmed Alaskan Village as establishing the appropriate vicarious liability test for cases involving conduct within the course and scope of employment but adopted the complicity rule for cases involving employee conduct outside the course and scope of employment. VECO, 970 P.2d at 923 & n.34. After our decision in Alaskan Village, the legislature undertook to regulate and narrow the circumstances in which punitive damages may be awarded and to limit the amount of such awards. See AS 09.17.020. Further, the Supreme Court of the United States has indicated that punitive damages are subject to review for excessiveness under the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment to the United States Constitution. Cooper Indus., Inc. v. Leatherman Tool Group, Inc., 532 U.S. 424 (2001). In light of these developments, the Alaskan Village rule may be anachronistic. If and when the point is properly preserved and raised, this court may consider adopting the narrower complicity rule.

10 See *Stephenson v. United States*, 771 F.2d 1105, 1107 (7th Cir. 1985) (relying on Wisconsin law to say that it is the employees conduct at the time of the accident that determines whether he is acting within the scope of his employment).

11 *Doe v. Samaritan Counseling Ctr.*, 791 P.2d 344, 346 (Alaska 1990).

12 *Id.* at 347; accord *Williams v. Alyeska Pipeline Serv. Co.*, 650 P.2d 343, 349 (Alaska 1982); *Luth v. Rogers & Babler Constr. Co.*, 507 P.2d 761, 764 & n.14 (Alaska 1973) (rejecting proposition that must satisfy each factor).

13 See *Gutierrez de Martinez v. Drug Enforcement Admin.*, 111 F.3d 1148, 1158 (4th Cir. 1997) (applying Virginia law and concluding that drinking alcohol by itself does not remove the employee from the scope of his employment); *Stephenson*, 771 F.2d at 1107-08 ([T]he fact that [the employee] was intoxicated when driving does not mean that he was acting outside the scope of his employment, but only that he failed to use reasonable care under the circumstances.).

14 *Ortiz v. Clinton*, 928 P.2d 718, 723 (Ariz. App. 1996); accord *Stephenson*, 771 F.2d at 1108 (The [employer] cannot insulate itself from liability . . . by promulgating regulations prohibiting employees from drinking and driving.); *Pyne v. Witmer*, 512 N.E.2d 993, 999 (Ill. App. 1987) (holding that employees violation of the employers policy against drinking on the job does not preclude liability under respondeat superior).

15 791 P.2d 344, 348 (Alaska 1990), clarified by *VECO, Inc. v. Rosebrock*, 970 P.2d 906, 924 n.36 (Alaska 1999) (disapproving of possible broad interpretation and requiring employees act to have at least some motivation to serve corporation).

16 *Alaskan Village, Inc. v. Smalley*, 720 P.2d 945, 948 (Alaska 1986).

17 *Norcon, Inc. v. Kotowski*, 971 P.2d 158, 175 (Alaska 1999).

18 720 P.2d at 948-49.

19 *Goddard v. Grand Trunk Rwy.*, 575 Me. 202, 222-23 (1869), as quoted in *Embrey v. Holly*, 442 A.2d 966, 970 (Md. 1982) (quoting this language as justification for following the course of employment approach); see also *Miller v. Blanton*, 210 S.W.2d 293, 297 (Ark. 1948) (Having, by the constitution of their being, to act solely by agents or servants, [corporations] must, as matter of sound public policy, be held liable for all the acts of their agents and servants who commit wrongs while performing the masters business, and in the scope of their employment; and this to the extent of liability for punitive damages in proper cases.).

20 *Embrey*, 442 A.2d at 970; see also, e.g., *Goddard*, 575 Me. at 222-23; *Thorne v. Contee*, 565 A.2d 102, 110 (Md. Spec. App. 1989) ([T]he tortious act of the servant done in the course of his employment is ordinarily the legal act of the master.); *Gifford v. Evans*, 192 N.W.2d 525, 529 (Mich. App. 1971) (Respondeat superior provides in essence that the act of an employee during the course of his employment is legally the act of the employer.).

21 See *Embrey*, 442 A.2d at 973 (holding that it was appropriate for trial court to award separate punitive damages awards against an employee and his vicariously liable employer).

because this would enable each award to be based on the two defendants differing financial status); see also *Hyatt Regency Phoenix Hotel Co. v. Winston & Strawn*, 907 P.2d 506, 521 (Ariz. App. 1995) (holding that punitive damages award against vicariously liable law firm was not excessive in part because [t]he award is proportionate to [the law firms] financial position).

22 See Alaska Evidence Rule 103(a)(1); see also *Norcon, Inc.*, 971 P.2d at 170 (holding that employer waived issue on appeal of whether employees testimony was unduly prejudicial by failing to object when testimony was offered at trial).

23 At trial Laidlaw did not object to Dr. Tennants new theory as beyond the scope of the expert disclosures or report and Laidlaw does not complain of such a discovery violation on appeal.

24 Laidlaw cites other courts for support. See, e.g., *Coleman v. Williams*, 356 N.E.2d 394, 397 (Ill. App. 1976) (denying reference to partys alcohol consumption earlier in day when no evidence existed that at time of accident party was actually intoxicated); *Gustavson v. Gaynor*, 503 A.2d 340, 342-43 (N.J. Super. 1985) (same).

25 Model Punitive Damages Act (U.L.A.) 7(a), quoted in *Norcon, Inc.*, 971 P.2d at 176. *Norcon, Inc.*, 971 P.2d at 175. 20 P.2d 945, 949 (Alaska 1986)).

26 *Id.* at 176.

27 Model Punitive Damages Act (U.L.A.) 7(a), quoted in *Norcon, Inc.*, 971 P.2d at 176.

28 *Norcon, Inc.*, 971 P.2d at 175.

29 *Alaskan Village*, 720 P.2d at 948.

30 See *Nenana City Sch. Dist. v. Coghill*, 898 P.2d 929, 934 (Alaska 1995) ([A]n argument not raised in a suit before the trial court will not be considered on appeal.); see also *Zeman v. Lufthansa German Airlines*, 699 P.2d 1274, 1280 (Alaska 1985) (noting that court may review an issue if new argument is closely related to trial court arguments so that they could have been gleaned from the pleadings).

31 Crouse also raises several other cross-appeal issues for consideration only if we grant Laidlaws request for a new trial. Our decision rejecting Laidlaws arguments on appeal makes it unnecessary to consider Crouses contingent cross-appeal issues.

LEXSEE 970 p.2d 906

**VECO, INC., Appellant and Cross-Appellee, v. CONSTANCE L ROSEBROCK,  
Appellee and Cross-Appellant.**

Supreme Court Nos. S-7080, S-7120, No. 5084

**SUPREME COURT OF ALASKA**

*970 P.2d 906; 1999 Alas. LEXIS 24*

**February 19, 1999, Decided**

**PRIOR HISTORY:**

[\*\*1] Appeal from the Superior Court of the State of Alaska, Third Judicial District, Anchorage, Joan M. Woodward, Judge. Superior Court No. 3AN-92-10614 CI.

This Opinion of Substituted by the Court for Withdrawn Opinion of December 18, 1998, Previously Reported at: *1998 Alas. LEXIS 173.*

**DISPOSITION:**

**AFFIRMED AND REVERSED.**

**CASE SUMMARY**

**PROCEDURAL POSTURE:** Appellant employer sought review of a decision from the Superior Court of the State of Alaska, Third Judicial District, Anchorage, awarding judgment to appellee employee in her sexual harassment and wrongful termination claims.

**OVERVIEW:** Plaintiff employee was subjected to sexual harassment arising to the level of a hostile work environment from her direct supervisor and another employee. Plaintiff complained to another of her supervisors and then went on a scheduled leave. Prior to her return to work, however, she was informed that she was laid off. Plaintiff sued and won a judgment including punitive damages. Defendant employer appealed and argued that punitive damages could not be awarded for acts of a supervisor outside the scope of the supervisor's employment. The court agreed, reversing the judgment as it pertained to the awarding of punitive damages. However, the court upheld the judgment in all other aspects and specifically remanded the issue of punitive damages for a new trial to determine whether punitive damages should have been awarded.

**OUTCOME:** Judgment for plaintiff was affirmed as to compensatory damages, but reversed and remanded for a new trial for a determination whether punitive damages could be assessed against defendant employer for the actions of its employee done outside the scope of employment.

**CORE TERMS:** supervisor, sexual harassment, punitive damages, wrongful termination, harassment, hostile, vicarious liability, severe, hostile work environment, pervasive, vicariously liable, sexual assault, new trial, retaliation, mixed-motive, supervisory, terminating, termination, remedial action, managerial, servant, pretext, scope of employment, employment decision, motive, employer liability, discriminatory, management-level, terminated, subjected

**LexisNexis(TM) HEADNOTES - Core Concepts**

***Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Title VII***

[HN1] A section of Alaska's anti-discrimination statute makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person in compensation or in a term, condition, or privilege of employment because of the person's sex when the reasonable demands of the position do not require distinction on the basis of sex. *Alaska Stat. § 18.80.220(a)(1)*. This section prohibits sexual harassment.

***Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Quid Pro Quo***

[HN2] Quid pro quo gender harassment occurs when an employer conditions employment benefits on sexual favors. It arises when an employer relies upon his or her authority to extort sexual consideration from an employee.

***Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment***

[HN3] In hostile work environment cases, employees work in offensive or abusive environments. Conduct which unreasonably interferes with work performance can alter a condition of employment and create an abusive working environment. Discriminatory behavior sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment and to create a discriminatory hostile work environment violates *Alaska Stat. § 18.80.220*.

***Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Quid Pro Quo***

[HN4] Quid pro quo harassment requires proof that a tangible employment action resulted from a refusal to submit to a supervisor's sexual demand.

***Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment***

[HN5] Unfulfilled threats or offensive conduct in general may fall within the hostile work environment classification.

***Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment***

[HN6] Often a hostile work environment is created by co-employees or supervisors acting beyond the scope of their employment. They are acting for personal reasons and not, even in part, to serve their employer. However, in the case of supervisors, harassment, though beyond the scope of their employment, may be facilitated by their position with the employer.

***Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Scope of Employment***

[HN7] Scope of employment is defined as follows: Conduct of a servant is within the scope of employment if, but only if: it is of the kind he is employed to perform; it occurs substantially within the authorized time and space limits; it is actuated, at least in part, by a purpose to serve the master, and if force is intentionally used by the servant against another, the use of force is not unexpected by the master. Conduct of a servant is not within the scope of employment if it is different in kind from that authorized, far beyond the authorized time or space limits, or too little actuated by a purpose to serve the master.

***Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Direct & Vicarious Liability******Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Scope of Employment***

[HN8] An employer is generally vicariously liable only for acts of employees acting within the scope of their employment. However, vicarious liability may also be imposed based on apparent authority or where an employee is aided in accomplishing a tort by the employee's position with the employer. But an employer's vicarious liability for punitive damages is limited to acts of managerial employees while acting within the scope of their employment. Alaska case law has eliminated the requirement that the employees be managerial, but not the requirement that their acts be within the scope of their employment.

***Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Direct & Vicarious Liability******Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Scope of Employment***

[HN9] A master is subject to liability for the torts of his servants committed while acting in the scope of their employment. A master is not subject to liability for the torts of his servants acting outside the scope of their employment, unless: the servant purported to act or to speak on behalf of the principal and there was reliance upon apparent authority, or he was aided in accomplishing the tort by the existence of the agency relation.

***Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Scope of Employment******Torts > Damages > Punitive Damages***

[HN10] Punitive damages can properly be awarded against a master or other principal because of an act by an agent if, but only if, the principal authorized the doing and the manner of the act, or the agent was unfit and the principal was reckless in employing him, or the agent was employed in a managerial capacity and was acting in the scope of employment, or the principal or a managerial agent of the principal ratified or approved the act.

*Civil Procedure > Jury Trials > Jury Instructions*

[HN11] Jury instructions involve questions of law, which this court reviews using its independent judgment. An erroneous statement of law in jury instructions will not be reversed unless prejudice is shown.

*Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Disparate Treatment*

*Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment*

[HN12] Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it an unlawful employment practice for an employer to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. 42 U.S.C.S. § 2000e-2(a) (1). The United States Supreme Court held that Title VII prohibits hostile environment sexual harassment.

*Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Direct & Vicarious Liability*

*Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment*

[HN13] Harassment by supervisors is facilitated, made more serious, and is less apt to be reported because supervisors are understood to be clothed with the employer's authority.

*Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Direct & Vicarious Liability*

*Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment*

[HN14] Even where the employer has issued a policy prohibiting sexual harassment, and where the employer has established procedures for the receipt of employee complaints, the employer will still have aided the supervisor in committing the harassment. Therefore, an employer is vicariously liable for the hostile work environment created by its supervisors regardless of whether management-level employees knew or should have known about the harassment, and regardless of whether the supervisors were acting within the scope of their employment.

*Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Direct & Vicarious Liability*

*Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment*

[HN15] An employer will only be vicariously liable for the acts of the complainant's supervisor, because only then will the supervisor be using his position with the employer to alter the conditions of the complainant's employment. A supervisor who does not oversee the complainant should be treated as a co-worker. In that situation, the supervisor does not have authority over the complainant and may not be aided by his position in the workplace. Furthermore, when a co-worker or supervisor with no control over the complainant creates a hostile environment, the complainant should be less hesitant to report the situation, since the harasser could not retaliate by changing the conditions of the complainant's employment. Thus, employers are only vicariously liable for hostile environment sexual harassment committed by the complainant's supervisor.

*Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Direct & Vicarious Liability*

*Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment*

[HN16] There is no basis for distinguishing between supervisors' acts of harassment and their failure to remedy known harassment. Supervisors who allow other employees to sexually harass employees they supervise have used their delegated authority to allow the harassment to continue.

*Civil Procedure > Trials > Judgment as Matter of Law*

[HN17] When reviewing a motion for a judgment notwithstanding the verdict, the court determines whether evidence, when viewed in the light most favorable to the non-movant, is such that reasonable persons could not differ in their judgment. The court neither weighs the evidence nor judges the credibility of witnesses. Rather, it employs an objective test: If there is room for diversity of opinion among reasonable people, then a jury question exists.

*Civil Procedure > Relief From Judgment > Motions for New Trial*

*Civil Procedure > Appeals > Standards of Review > Abuse of Discretion*

[HN18] The court reviews the superior court's denial of a motion for a new trial for an abuse of discretion. An abuse of discretion occurs only if the evidence supporting the jury's verdict was either completely lacking or slight and unconvincing, so that the verdict was manifestly unreasonable and unjust. The court will draw all inferences from the facts in the light most favorable to the non-movant.

**Governments > Legislation > Interpretation**

**Civil Procedure > Jury Trials > Province of Court & Jury**

[HN19] Statutory interpretation is a question of law which this court reviews using its independent judgment.

**Torts > Damages > Compensatory Damages**

[HN20] *Alaska Stat. § 22.10.020(i)* authorizes a court finding a violation of any of the provisions of *Alaska Stat. § 18.80* to award any other relief including the payment of money, that is appropriate. This includes an award of compensatory damages.

**Civil Procedure > Pleading & Practice > Pleadings > Amended Pleadings**

[HN21] The superior court is accorded wide discretion in ruling on motions to amend pleadings.

**Labor & Employment Law > Wrongful Termination**

**Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Retaliation**

[HN22] *Alaska Stat. § 18.80.220(a)(4)* provides that it is an unlawful employment practice for an employer, labor organization, or employment agency to discharge, expel, or otherwise discriminate against a person because the person has opposed any practices forbidden under *Alaska Stat. §§ 18.80.200-18.80.280* or because the person has filed a complaint, testified, or assisted in a proceeding under this chapter.

**Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Sexual Harassment > Hostile Work Environment**

[HN23] In determining whether an employer has violated *Alaska Stat. § 18.80.220* when there is no direct evidence of discriminatory intent, the court has adopted the three-part framework used in Title VII cases. This test also governs actions for retaliatory discharge.

**Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Retaliation**

[HN24] To establish a prima facie case of discriminatory retaliation, a plaintiff must show that: she engaged in an activity protected under Title VII; her employer subjected her to adverse employment action; there was a causal link between the protected activity and the employer's action. Causation may be inferred from the proximity in time between the protected action and the allegedly retaliatory discharge. Once a plaintiff establishes a prima facie case, the burden of production shifts to the employer to articulate a legitimate, non-retaliatory explanation for the action. To satisfy this burden, the employer need only produce admissible evidence which would allow the trier of fact rationally to conclude that the employment decision had not been motivated by discriminatory animus. If the employer successfully rebuts the inference of retaliation that arises from establishment of a prima facie case, then the burden shifts once again to the plaintiff to show that the defendant's proffered explanation is merely a pretext for discrimination.

**Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Retaliation**

[HN25] The question of whether a mixed-motive theory applies to wrongful termination depends on the interpretation of the term "because" in *Alaska Stat. § 18.20.220*. In interpreting Title VII, the United States Supreme Court held that the words "because of sex" mean that gender must be irrelevant to employment decisions. It emphasized that the words "because of" do not mean "solely because of," and held that Title VII prohibited decisions based on a mixture of legitimate and illegitimate considerations. The Court then held that if the plaintiff shows that gender was a motivating part in an employment decision, the defendant may avoid a finding of liability only by proving that it would have made the same decision even if it had not allowed gender to play such a role.

**Labor & Employment Law > Discrimination > Retaliation**

[HN26] The broad language of *Alaska Stat. § 22.10.020(c)* indicates a legislative intent to authorize an award of compensatory and punitive damages for violations of *Alaska Stat. § 18.80*, in addition to the equitable remedies such as enjoining illegal employment activities and ordering back pay as a form of restitution.

**Torts > Damages > Punitive Damages**

[HN27] The plain language of *Alaska Stat. § 22.10.020(i)* authorizes the superior court to award any other relief, including the payment of money. Further, punitive damages are recoverable in discrimination cases. Moreover, under the common law, Alaska's superior courts possess the authority to award punitive damages for outrageous conduct. Allowing punitive damages under *Alaska Stat. § 18.80.220* does not reach beyond settled expectations. Punitive damages are authorized under § 18.80.220 and § 22.10.020(i).

*Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Scope of Employment*

[HN28] When an employee commits a wrongful act which would subject him personally to punitive damages, the essential inquiry must be whether the act was committed while the employee was acting within the scope of his employment. If the employee was acting within the scope of his employment, the corporation will be liable for punitive damages regardless of whether that employee may be classified as menial.

*Labor & Employment Law > Employer Liability > Tort Liability > Scope of Employment*

*Torts > Damages > Punitive Damages*

[HN29] If an employee is acting outside the scope of his employment, he is not acting in any way to further the goals of the employer. The interest of preventing sexual harassment is served by holding an employer vicariously liable for its supervisors' sexual harassment, regardless of whether they are acting within the scope of their employment, because the employer may be deterred from delegating authority to untrained or incompetent supervisors. However, this does not mean that an innocent employer should be punished by an award of punitive damages when its supervisors are acting outside the scope of their employment. Punitive damages are disfavored and are allowed only within narrow limits.

*Civil Procedure > Relief From Judgment > Motions for New Trial*

[HN30] When a jury award may be based on any one of several theories, one of which has been erroneously submitted to the jury, a new trial is required.

*Civil Procedure > Appeals > Reviewability > Preservation for Review*

[HN31] Alaska R. Civ. P. 51(a) provides that no party may assign as error the giving or the failure to give an instruction unless the party objects thereto stating distinctly the matter to which the party objects and the grounds of the objection.

**COUNSEL:**

Donna C. Willard, Law Offices of Donna C. Willard, Anchorage, for Appellant and Cross-Appellee.

Robert P. Owens, Copeland, Landye, Bennett and Wolf, Anchorage, and Timothy D. Dooley, Anchorage, for Appellee and Cross-Appellant.

**JUDGES:**

Before: Rabinowitz, Matthews, Eastaugh, and Fabe, Justices. [Compton, Chief Justice, not participating.]

**OPINIONBY:**

MATTHEWS

**OPINION:**

[\*908] OPINION

MATTHEWS, Justice.

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Many issues are presented in this sexual harassment and wrongful termination case. The two most important are:

(1) Can an employer be liable for acts of a supervisor [\*\*2] which create a hostile work environment even though the supervisor is acting outside the scope of his employment?

(2) Can punitive damages be imposed for a supervisor's acts outside the scope of his employment?

We answer "yes" to the first question because the supervisor is enabled by his position with the employer to impose unwelcome sexual conduct on the employee. We answer "no" to the second question because it is unfair to punish an employer for acts committed by employees who are in no sense pursuing objectives of the employer.

## II. FACTS AND PROCEEDINGS

Constance Rosebrock began working for VECO in Anchorage in April 1991. In September she transferred to Arctic Rentals, a VECO subsidiary located on the North Slope. n1 Rosebrock worked for Arctic Rentals on the North Slope for approximately six weeks, from September 11 until September 26, and from October 3 until October 26. On October 30 or 31 she was notified that she had been laid off.

-----Footnotes-----

n1 VECO admits that Arctic Rentals is merely a division of VECO, and does not argue that it is a separate corporate entity.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*3]

Rosebrock claims that during her employment with VECO on the North Slope, Rick Rorick, the supervisor in charge of Arctic Rentals, subjected her to hostile environment sexual harassment. In addition, she claims that she was sexually assaulted by a VECO employee toward the end of her second tour of duty. She claims that VECO wrongfully terminated her when she complained about the assault.

In December 1991 Rosebrock filed a complaint with the Alaska Human Rights Commission. She also filed suit in superior court [\*909] against VECO and Bill Dropps, the employee who allegedly sexually assaulted her. After settlement negotiations in which Rosebrock agreed to dismiss Dropps as a party, Rosebrock's claims of hostile environment sexual harassment and wrongful termination proceeded to a jury trial. n2

-----Footnotes-----

n2 While Rosebrock originally alleged both quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment claims, the jury only decided the hostile environment sexual harassment claim.

-----End Footnotes-----

At trial, Rosebrock testified that Rorick had sexually [\*\*4] propositioned her on several occasions. She also testified that Rorick made several explicit comments about the size of her breasts. Furthermore, Rosebrock testified that she, Bobby Clark, and Bill Dropps gathered in Dropps's room on October 23 to watch the World Series game. n3 She testified that when Clark left the room, Dropps grabbed her by her arms and legs and threw her onto the bed. They struggled, and he hit her in the ribs. After more struggling, however, he released her and begged her to not tell anyone.

-----Footnotes-----

n3 Rosebrock testified that Clark was her supervisor when Rorick was not on the slope. Dropps was also a supervisor, but he was not Rosebrock's supervisor and did not have any authority over her.

-----End Footnotes-----

Rosebrock also testified that early the next morning she reported the assault to Clark, who was her supervisor on duty at that time. She also claimed that she showed her bruises to a co-worker, Peggy Gerhardson, who assured her that she and Clark would take care of the problem.

Rosebrock went on leave two [\*\*5] or three days later. She testified that before she left, the administrator, Norm Denison, approved her work schedule for the next five months. On October 30 or 31, however, Denison called her at home to tell her that she had been "laid off." Rosebrock testified that she then called Denison several times to see what

VECO was doing about her complaints of sexual assault. Rosebrock claimed that Denison told her VECO had taken care of the problem. Rosebrock stated that when she asked him what had been done, he told her, "you're gone."

The jury found VECO liable for Rosebrock's hostile environment sexual harassment claim and her wrongful termination claim. It awarded her \$ 27,500 for emotional distress damages, \$ 75,000 for lost wages, and \$ 1,500,000 for punitive damages. VECO then moved for a judgment notwithstanding the verdict, for a new trial, and for a remittitur. The superior court granted a partial remittitur, reducing the award for lost wages to \$ 4,000. It denied VECO's other motions.

VECO appeals this judgment. n4 Rosebrock cross-appeals on discovery sanction issues, in the event this court remands for a new trial.

-----Footnotes-----

n4 Counsel for VECO on appeal did not serve as its trial counsel.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*6]

### III. DISCUSSION

We discuss the following issues in this case:

#### A. Sexual Harassment

1. Did the superior court properly instruct the jury as to whether VECO could be held liable for hostile environment sexual harassment committed by a supervisor acting outside the scope of his employment?
2. Did the superior court err in denying VECO's motions for JNOV and for a new trial on Rosebrock's hostile environment sexual harassment claim?
  - a. Was the evidence sufficient to support a finding that the harassment was severe or pervasive?
  - b. Was the harassment committed by a supervisor whose actions can be imputed to VECO?
3. Are damages for emotional distress caused by sexual harassment barred by the exclusive remedy provision of the Alaska Workers' Compensation Act?

#### B. Wrongful Termination

1. Did the superior court err by permitting Rosebrock to amend her complaint after the trial had concluded?
2. Did the superior court properly instruct the jury as to whether VECO [\*910] could be held liable for the alleged wrongful termination of Rosebrock?
3. Did the superior court properly instruct the jury on mixed motives?
4. Did the superior [\*\*7] court err in denying VECO's motions for JNOV and for a new trial on Rosebrock's wrongful termination claim?

#### C. Punitive Damages

1. Are punitive damages authorized under AS 18.80.220 and AS 22.10.020(i)?
2. Did the jury instructions err in permitting the jury to award punitive damages against VECO for acts of a supervisor beyond the scope of the supervisor's employment?

3. Did VECO properly object to the punitive damage instruction?

The parties have also briefed additional issues which do not require discussion for reasons set out in footnote 37, pages 44-45.

A. Sexual Harassment

[HN1] A section of Alaska's anti-discrimination statute makes it unlawful for an employer "to discriminate against a person in compensation or in a term, condition, or privilege of employment because of the person's . . . sex . . . when the reasonable demands of the position do not require distinction on the basis of . . . sex . . ." AS 18.80.220(a) (1). In *French v. Jadon, Inc.*, 911 P.2d 20 (Alaska 1996), we held that this section prohibited sexual harassment. Further, we accepted the customary division of sexual harassment claims into those involving a quid pro quo [\*\*8] and those which merely involve a hostile work environment.

Concerning the former, we noted that "[HN2] quid pro quo gender harassment occurs when an employer conditions employment benefits on sexual favors. It arises when an employer relies upon his or her authority 'to extort sexual consideration from an employee.'" *Id.* at 26 (citation omitted) (quoting *Canada v. Boyd Group, Inc.*, 809 F. Supp. 771, 777 (D. Nev. 1992). With respect to the latter we noted that [HN3] in

hostile work environment cases, "employees work in offensive or abusive environments. Conduct which unreasonably interferes with work performance can alter a condition of employment and create an abusive working environment." . . .

. . . Discriminatory behavior sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment and to create a discriminatory hostile work environment violates AS 18.80.220.

911 P.2d at 28 (citations and footnote omitted) (quoting *Ellison v. Brady*, 924 F.2d 872, 875, 877 (9th Cir. 1991)).

[HN4] Quid pro quo harassment requires proof that "a tangible employment action resulted from a refusal to submit to a supervisor's sexual demand." n5 [HN5] "Unfulfilled threats" or [\*\*9] "offensive conduct in general" may fall within the hostile work environment classification. n6

-----Footnotes-----

n5 *Burlington Industries, Inc. v. Ellerth*, 524 U.S. 742, 118 S. Ct. 2257, 141 L. Ed. 2d 633 (1998).

n6 *Id.*

-----End Footnotes-----

[HN6] Often a hostile work environment is created by co-employees or supervisors acting beyond the scope of their employment. They are acting for personal reasons and not, even in part, to serve their employer. n7 However, in the case of supervisors, harassment, though beyond the scope of their employment, may be facilitated by their position with the employer.

-----Footnotes-----

n7 [HN7] Restatement (Second) of Agency § 228 defines scope of employment as follows:

- (1) Conduct of a servant is within the scope of employment if, but only if:
  - (a) it is of the kind he is employed to perform;
  - (b) it occurs substantially within the authorized time and space limits;
  - (c) it is actuated, at least in part, by a purpose to serve the master, and
  - (d) if force is intentionally used by the servant against another, the use of force is not unexpected by the master.

(2) Conduct of a servant is not within the scope of employment if it is different in kind from that authorized, far beyond the authorized time or space limits, or too little actuated by a purpose to serve the master.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*10] [HN8]

[\*911] An employer is generally vicariously liable only for acts of employees acting within the scope of their employment. However, vicarious liability may also be imposed based on apparent authority or where an employee is aided in accomplishing a tort by the employee's position with the employer. n8 But an employer's vicarious liability for punitive damages is limited by the Restatement (Second) of Agency to acts of (1) managerial employees (2) while acting within the scope of their employment. n9 Alaska case law has eliminated the requirement that the employees be managerial, n10 but not the requirement that their acts be within the scope of their employment.

-----Footnotes-----

n8 [HN9] Section 219 of the Restatement (Second) of Agency provides in relevant part:

(1) A master is subject to liability for the torts of his servants committed while acting in the scope of their employment.

(2) A master is not subject to liability for the torts of his servants acting outside the scope of their employment, unless:

....

(d) the servant purported to act or to speak on behalf of the principal and there was reliance upon apparent authority, or he was aided in accomplishing the tort by the existence of the agency relation.

[\*\*11]

n9 [HN10] Section 217C of the Restatement (Second) of Agency provides:

Punitive damages can properly be awarded against a master or other principal because of an act by an agent if, but only if:

- (a) the principal authorized the doing and the manner of the act, or
- (b) the agent was unfit and the principal was reckless in employing him, or
- (c) the agent was employed in a managerial capacity and was acting in the scope of employment, or
- (d) the principal or a managerial agent of the principal ratified or approved the act.

n10 See *Alaskan Village, Inc. v. Smalley*, 720 P.2d 945, 948-49 (Alaska 1986).

-----End Footnotes-----

These principles are dispositive of the present case.

1. Did the superior court properly instruct the jury as to whether VECO could be held liable for hostile environment sexual harassment committed by a supervisor acting outside the scope of his employment? n11

-----Footnotes-----

n11 [HN11] Jury instructions involve questions of law, which this court reviews using its independent judgment. See *Aviation Assocs., Ltd. v. Temsco Helicopters, Inc.*, 881 P.2d 1127, 1130 n.4 (Alaska 1994). An erroneous statement of law in jury instructions will not be reversed unless prejudice is shown. *Id.*

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*12]

VECO claims that the superior court's instructions on liability were erroneous because they allowed the jury to impose "strict liability" on it if a low-level supervisor subjected Rosebrock to hostile environment sexual harassment, or if a low-level supervisor knew about the harassment, but failed to take remedial action. It argues that it should only be

liable for a supervisor's hostile environment sexual harassment if a management-level employee knew or should have known about the harassment and failed to take proper and effective remedial action. n12 Rosebrock, however, argues that an employer should always be liable for hostile environment sexual harassment if it is committed by its supervisors or if its supervisors had knowledge and failed to take remedial action.

-----Footnotes-----

n12 A management-level employee has been defined as one who has the "stature and authority of the agent to exercise control, discretion and independent judgment over a certain area of a business with some power to set policy for the company." *Fitzgerald v. Mountain States Tel. & Tel. Co.*, 68 F.3d 1257, 1263 (10th Cir. 1995); see also *Albuquerque Concrete Coring Co. v. Pan Am World Servs., Inc.*, 118 N.M. 140, 879 P.2d 772, 777 (N.M. 1994) (defining managerial employee "as one who 'formulates, determines and effectuates his employer's policies, one with discretion or authority to make ultimate determinations independent of company consideration and approval of whether a policy should be adopted.'") (quoting *Kemner v. Monsanto Co.*, 217 Ill. App. 3d 188, 576 N.E.2d 1146, 1157, 160 Ill. Dec. 192 (Ill. App. 1991)).

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*13]

The superior court instructed the jury on liability as follows in Instruction No. 16:

If you find that VECO employees subjected Rosebrock to a sexually hostile working environment as previously defined, you must decide whether VECO itself is liable for its employees' conduct.

You must first consider the role of VECO supervisory employees. You shall find VECO liable for the conduct of its [\*\*912] supervisory employees if you find that it is more likely than not that:

1. One or more of VECO's supervisory employees encouraged, caused, permitted, ratified, or participated in the conduct; or
2. One or more of VECO's supervisory employees, knowing of the conduct, excused it or failed to take remedial action reasonably calculated to end the harassment. Such remedial action must be immediate and must remedy the conduct without adversely affecting the terms or conditions of the complaining party's employment.

You shall find VECO liable for the conduct of its non-supervisory employees if you find that it is more likely than not that such employees were acting within the scope of their employment, and if VECO knew or should have known of the harassment and failed to take remedial action as discussed [\*\*14] above.

The first paragraph of the instruction directs the jury to proceed if "VECO employees," supervisors or otherwise, subjected Rosebrock to a hostile work environment. The second paragraph defines when VECO will be liable for the acts or omissions of its "supervisory employees." The subparagraph numbered one allowed the jury to impose liability on VECO if its supervisory employees "encouraged, caused, permitted, ratified, or participated" in the harassment. It did not require the jury to find that those supervisors had acted within the scope of their employment or used their delegated authority to carry out the harassment. In addition, it did not require the jury to find that a management-level employee knew or should have known about the harassment. Thus this subparagraph allowed the jury to impose liability on VECO for the sexual harassment by a low-level supervisor, acting outside the scope of his employment, even if VECO management-level employees did not know or have constructive knowledge of the harassment.

Subparagraph number two allowed the jury to impose liability on VECO if a supervisor knew about the harassment, but did not take proper remedial action. It did not [\*\*15] limit VECO's liability to an omission by a management-level employee, but allowed the jury to impose liability on VECO for a low-level supervisor's failure to take proper remedial action. n13

-----Footnotes-----

n13 Paragraph three imposes liability on VECO for hostile environment sexual harassment by non-supervisors who acted within the scope of their employment, as long as VECO knew or should have known about the harassment. VECO does not challenge this part of the instruction.

-----End Footnotes-----

Instruction 17 defined "supervisor" as follows:

A supervisor is one who serves in a supervisory position and has corporate authority to affect the terms and conditions of the employees he supervises. In other words a person is a supervisor if he has the authority to hire, fire, promote, discipline, or in any other manner affect the terms or conditions of an employee's employment.

Taken together these instructions allowed the jury to impose liability on VECO for the acts or omissions of Rosebrock's immediate supervisors, regardless of whether [\*\*16] they were acting within the scope of their employment, and regardless of whether management-level employees knew or should have known about the harassment.

The scope of an employer's liability for its employees' hostile environment sexual harassment is an issue of first impression in Alaska. In interpreting Alaska's anti-discrimination laws, we have looked to federal Title VII cases for guidance. n14 See *French*, 911 P.2d at 28 n.8. We have observed, however, that AS 18.80.220 "is intended to be more broadly interpreted than federal law to further the goal of eradication of discrimination." [\*913] *Wondzell v. Alaska Wood Prods., Inc.*, 601 P.2d 584, 585 (Alaska 1979).

-----Footnotes-----

n14 [HN12] Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it "an unlawful employment practice for an employer . . . to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a) (1). In *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, 477 U.S. 57, 66-67, 91 L. Ed. 2d 49, 106 S. Ct. 2399 (1986), the United States Supreme Court held that Title VII prohibits hostile environment sexual harassment.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*17]

The United States Supreme Court addressed the issue of employer liability in *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, 477 U.S. 57, 91 L. Ed. 2d 49, 106 S. Ct. 2399 (1986). n15 Because the factual record had not been fully developed in the trial court, the majority opinion refused to "issue a definitive rule on employer liability," but stated that

we do agree with the EEOC that Congress wanted courts to look to agency principles for guidance in this area. While such common-law principles may not be transferable in all their particulars to Title VII, Congress' decision to define "employer" to include any "agent" of an employer, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e(b), surely evinces an intent to place some limits on the acts of employees for which employers under Title VII are to be held responsible. For this reason, we hold that the Court of Appeals erred in concluding that employers are always automatically liable for sexual harassment by their supervisors. See generally Restatement (Second) of Agency § 219-237 (1958). For the same reason, absence of notice to an employer does not necessarily insulate that employer from liability.

*Id.* at 72. The Court stated that the court of appeals was "wrong to entirely disregard [\*\*18] agency principles and impose absolute liability on employers for the acts of their supervisors, regardless of the circumstances of a particular case." n16 *Id.* at 73.

-----Footnotes-----

n15 In *Meritor*, a female bank employee alleged that her supervisor, who was a bank vice-president and branch manager, had sexually harassed her. 477 U.S. at 59-60. In dicta, the district court held that the bank could not be held liable because it did not have any knowledge of the alleged harassment. *Meritor*, 477 U.S. at 61-62. The Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia reversed, holding that the bank was liable for sexual harassment by its supervisory personnel, regardless of whether or not it knew or should have known about the conduct. *Vinson v. Taylor*, 243 U.S. 'pp. D.C. 323, 753 F.2d 141, 150 (D.C. Cir. 1985). It held that a supervisor is an agent of his employer and, even if he lacks authority to hire, fire, or promote, "the mere existence -- or even the appearance -- of a significant degree of influence in vital job decisions gives any supervisor the opportunity to impose on employees." *Id.* (footnote omitted).

n16 Meritor does not prohibit courts from imposing vicarious liability on employers for hostile environment sexual harassment committed by their supervisors. Rather, it only prohibits federal courts from "concluding that employers are always automatically liable for sexual harassment by their supervisors." 477 U.S. at 72 (emphasis added). Thus, Meritor allows federal courts to impose vicarious liability in some instances.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*19]

Justice Marshall, concurring with three other justices in Meritor, reached the issue of employer liability, and stated that employers should be held liable for a supervisor's hostile environment sexual harassment of an employee under his supervision, regardless of notice. See 477 U.S. at 74, 76-77 (Marshall, J., concurring). He stated:

It is the authority vested in the supervisor by the employer that enables him to commit the wrong: it is precisely because the supervisor is understood to be clothed with the employer's authority that he is able to impose unwelcome sexual conduct on subordinates. There is therefore no justification for a special rule, to be applied only in "hostile environment" cases, that sexual harassment does not create employer liability until the employee suffering the discrimination notifies other supervisors. No such requirement appears in the statute, and no such requirement can coherently be drawn from the law of agency.

Meritor, 477 U.S. at 76-77 (first and third emphasis added). He emphasized that a supervisor's authority is not limited to changing employees' status by hiring, firing, or disciplining them; instead, a supervisor also [\*\*20] has the responsibility to supervise the daily work environment and to ensure a safe, productive work environment. See Meritor, 477 U.S. at 76. n17

-----Footnotes-----

n17 In response to Meritor, lower federal courts fashioned confusing and even contradictory rules for when employers can be held vicariously liable for sexual harassment committed by their supervisors. See Frederick J. Lewis & Thomas L. Henderson, Employer Liability for "Hostile Work Environment" Sexual Harassment Created by Supervisors: The Search for an Appropriate Standard, 25 U. Mem. L. Rev. 667 (1995) (providing a survey of the standards which the various federal circuits have employed).

-----End Footnotes-----

[\*914] We agree with Justice Marshall's view. [HN13] Harassment by supervisors is facilitated, made more serious, and is less apt to be reported because supervisors are "understood to be clothed with the employer's authority." 477 U.S. at 77. The Restatement (Second) of Agency § 219(2) (d) supports imposing vicarious liability in such circumstances. It provides:

(2) A master is not [\*\*21] subject to liability for the torts of his servants acting outside the scope of their employment, unless:

....

(d) the servant purported to act or to speak on behalf of the principal and there was reliance upon apparent authority, or he was aided in accomplishing the tort by the existence of the agency relation.

(Emphasis added.)

The Massachusetts Supreme Court has employed this theory to hold employers vicariously liable for hostile environment sexual harassment by their supervisors:

Harassment by a supervisor carries an implied threat that the supervisor will punish resistance through exercising supervisory powers, which may range from discharge to assignment of work, particularly exacting scrutiny, or refusal to protect the employee from coworker harassment. Quid pro quo harassment may be easier to identify as an abuse of the authority vested in a supervisor because of the effect on tangible job conditions, but it does not define the limit of a

supervisor's authority. Although coworkers or even outsiders may also be capable of creating a sexually harassing work environment, it is the authority conferred upon a supervisor by the employer that makes the [\*\*22] supervisor particularly able to force subordinates to submit to sexual harassment.

*College-Town v. Massachusetts Comm'n Against Discrimination*, 400 Mass. 156, 508 N.E.2d 587, 593 (Mass. 1987) (emphasis added) (citation omitted).

[HN14] Even where the employer has issued a policy prohibiting sexual harassment, and where the employer has established procedures for the receipt of employee complaints, the employer will still have aided the supervisor in committing the harassment. See *Meritor*, 477 U.S. at 76-77 (Marshall, J., concurring). Therefore, we hold that an employer is vicariously liable for the hostile work environment created by its supervisors regardless of whether management-level employees knew or should have known about the harassment, and regardless of whether the supervisors were acting within the scope of their employment. n18

-----Footnotes-----

n18 In *Burlington Industries v. Ellerth*, 524 U.S. 742, 118 S. Ct. 2257, 141 L. Ed. 2d 633 (1998), and *Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*, 524 U.S. 775, 118 S. Ct. 2275, 141 L. Ed. 2d 662 (1998), both decided after this case was briefed and argued, the United States Supreme Court revisited the subject of hostile work environment sexual harassment cases and made a number of observations relevant to this case. The Court noted that for sexual harassment to be actionable it must be "severe or pervasive," that the non-statutory terms "quid pro quo" and "hostile work environment" illustrate the distinction between cases which involve a threat which is carried out and generally offensive conduct, but are not in themselves controlling as to the imposition of vicarious liability, and that generally "sexual harassment by a supervisor is not conduct within the scope of employment." *Burlington* at 2265, 2267. The Court endorsed the application of the "aided in agency" theory expressed in the Restatement (Second) of Agency § 219(2)(d). However, where no tangible employment action has been taken, the Court devised an affirmative defense for the employer. The defense consists of two elements:

(a) that the employer exercised reasonable care to prevent and correct promptly any sexually harassing behavior, and (b) that the plaintiff employee unreasonably failed to take advantage of any preventive or corrective opportunities provided by the employer or to avoid harm otherwise. While proof that an employer had promulgated an anti-harassment policy with complaint procedure is not necessary in every instance as a matter of law, the need for a stated policy suitable to the employment circumstances may appropriately be addressed in any case when litigating the first element of the defense. And while proof that an employee failed to fulfill the corresponding obligation of reasonable care to avoid harm is not limited to showing an unreasonable failure to use any complaint procedure provided by the employer, a demonstration of such failure will normally suffice to satisfy the employer's burden under the second element of the defense.

*Burlington* at 2270, *Faragher* at 2293. While these recent cases are thus in several respects supportive of the views we express herein as to the liability of an employer for the harassing acts of a supervisor, we have no occasion to consider whether the affirmative defense which they announce should be adopted as a feature of Alaska anti-discrimination law. Understandably, the issue of the adoption of such a defense was not raised below or on appeal.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*23]

[\*915] Agency principles also provide an important limitation on employer liability, however. [HN15] An employer will only be vicariously liable for the acts of the complainant's supervisor, because only then will the supervisor be using his position with the employer to alter the conditions of the complainant's employment. See *French*, 911 P.2d at 28 (defining hostile work environment as "discriminatory behavior sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment"). As Justice Marshall stated, a supervisor who does not oversee the complainant should be treated as a co-worker. See *Meritor*, 477 U.S. at 77 (Marshall, J., concurring). In that situation, the supervisor does not have authority over the complainant and may not be aided by his position in the workplace. Furthermore, when a co-worker or supervisor with no control over the complainant creates a hostile environment, the complainant should be less hesitant to report the situation, since the harasser could not retaliate by changing the conditions of the complainant's employment. Thus, employers are only vicariously liable for hostile environment sexual harassment committed by the complainant's supervisor. [\*\*24] n19

-----Footnotes-----

n19 The parties have used the term "strict liability" to describe holding the employer liable for the acts of its supervisors. Since our analysis is based on agency principles, the liability is more accurately defined as "vicarious liability."

-----End Footnotes-----

These same principles apply to determine the scope of an employer's liability when its supervisors know about sexual harassment by a co-worker or by a supervisor who does not have authority over the complainant, but fail to take appropriate remedial action. [HN16] There is no basis for distinguishing between supervisors' acts of harassment and their failure to remedy known harassment. Supervisors who allow other employees to sexually harass employees they supervise have used their delegated authority to allow the harassment to continue.

For the above reasons we conclude that the trial court correctly instructed the jury on VECO's liability for hostile environment sexual harassment by a supervisor acting outside the scope of his employment.

2. Did the superior court err [\*\*25] in denying VECO's motions for JNOV and for a new trial on Rosebrock's hostile environment sexual harassment claim? n20

-----Footnotes-----

n20 As stated in *Diamond v. Wagstaff*, 873 P.2d 1286, 1290 (Alaska 1994):

[HN17] When reviewing a motion for a judgment n.o.v., we determine whether evidence, when viewed in the light most favorable to the non-movant, is such that reasonable persons could not differ in their judgment. We neither weigh the evidence nor judge the credibility of witnesses. Rather, we employ an objective test: If there is room for diversity of opinion among reasonable people, then a jury question exists.

[HN18] We review the superior court's denial of a motion for a new trial for an abuse of discretion. An abuse of discretion occurs only if the evidence supporting the jury's verdict was either completely lacking or slight and unconvincing, so that the verdict was manifestly unreasonable and unjust. Again, we draw all inferences from the facts in the light most favorable to the non-movant.

When reviewing a jury verdict under these standards, this court necessarily considers hypothetical explanations for the jury's determination. Otherwise, we would not be able to review verdicts at all.

(Citations omitted.)

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*26]

VECO filed motions for judgment notwithstanding the verdict (JNOV) and for a new trial, alleging that the evidence was insufficient to support a finding of liability for hostile environment sexual harassment. VECO claims that the evidence did not support the jury's implied findings that the alleged harassment was severe or pervasive or that the alleged harassers were supervisors whose actions could be imputed to VECO.

a. Was the evidence sufficient to support a finding that the harassment was severe or pervasive? n21

-----Footnotes-----

n21 The trial in this case was held before we decided *French*. However, the superior court used the same standard called for in *French*, and VECO does not challenge the superior court's employment of the severe or pervasive standard. The superior court also instructed the jury that, in evaluating whether the behavior complained of was severe or pervasive, "You should consider this question from the perspective of a reasonable woman: would a reasonable woman consider the conduct sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of employment and create an abusive working environment?" In *French*, we specifically declined to decide whether to adopt the "reasonable woman" standard. *French*, 911 P.2d at 28 n.10. VECO does not appeal this instruction, so we have no occasion to review it.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*27]

In French, we held that "discriminatory behavior sufficiently severe or pervasive [\*916] to alter the conditions of the victim's employment and to create a discriminatory hostile work environment violates AS 18.80.220." 911 P.2d at 28. VECO argues that the evidence at trial does not support the jury's verdict, because the evidence consisted of name-calling and insults, which was not severe or pervasive harassment. Viewing all the evidence in the light most favorable to Rosebrock, we disagree.

The evidence of sexual harassment, in part, is as follows. Rosebrock testified that on her first tour of duty, when she was introduced to her supervisor, Rick Rorick, he stated, "Let's get down to business. Are you married, and do you fool around?" Rosebrock also testified that Rorick told her that strange things happened to women in the middle of the night. In addition, Rorick would say to her, on occasion, "You're in a good mood. Who are you doing?" He would ask her if her back ached, or why she did not fall over, apparently referring to the size of her breasts.

Rosebrock also testified that when she approached Rorick to complain about not receiving a room assignment, he asked her to come to [\*\*28] his room later that night. She stated that when she did go to talk with him, for the purpose of receiving a room assignment, he said, "I knew you from [another job on] rig 9. You were the redhead with the big tits." He also said that she could stay with him in his room, so long as no one saw her leave in the morning.

Also, Rosebrock testified that soon after she started her second tour of duty, Rorick pointed to her in public and shouted, "Boone and Crocket." Rosebrock discovered that the comment referred to her breasts. She claimed that it became common for people at VECO to call her by that name, and that to avoid hearing it, she would refrain from entering the dining hall for two meals every day and would go there late for dinner.

Viewing all of the evidence in the light most favorable to Rosebrock, reasonable jurors could have concluded that Rorick's behavior was severe or pervasive enough to alter the conditions of Rosebrock's employment and create a hostile work environment. The sexualized name-calling, in particular, was recurrent. While any single incident of name-calling might not have been severe, taken together, these incidents constitute a pattern of harassment which [\*\*29] might reasonably be regarded as severe or pervasive. See, e.g., *Ellison v. Brady*, 924 F.2d 872, 876-81 (9th Cir. 1991) (indicating that the required showing of severity varies inversely with the pervasiveness of the conduct).

b. Was the harassment committed by a supervisor whose actions can be imputed to VECO?

VECO claims that the alleged harassment was not committed by a supervisor whose actions can be imputed to VECO. We have held that VECO may be vicariously liable if Rosebrock's supervisors subjected her to hostile environment sexual harassment. VECO offered the jury instruction which defined supervisor as follows:

A supervisor is one who serves in a supervisory position and has corporate authority to affect the terms and conditions of the employees he supervises. In other words a person is a supervisor if he has the authority to hire, fire, promote, discipline, or in any other manner affect the terms or conditions of an employee's employment.

Therefore, the only question is whether the evidence, taken in the light most favorable to Rosebrock, could lead reasonable jurors to infer that the harasser, Rorick, was Rosebrock's supervisor. The evidence supports [\*\*30] such a conclusion.

First, and most persuasive, Rorick admitted that he had the authority to fire Rosebrock, and that he had the power to discipline [\*917] and sanction employees. Rorick also testified that he would expect Rosebrock to complain to him about room assignments.

We thus hold that the evidence was sufficient to support the jury's verdict that VECO was liable for hostile environment sexual harassment, because Rosebrock's supervisor subjected her to severe or pervasive sexual harassment. The superior court did not err in denying VECO's motions for a new trial or JNOV on Rosebrock's hostile environment sexual harassment claim.

3. Are damages for emotional distress caused by sexual harassment barred by the exclusive remedy provision of the Alaska Workers' Compensation Act? n22

-----Footnotes-----

n22 [HN19] Statutory interpretation is a question of law which this court reviews using its independent judgment. See *Huf v. Arctic Alaska Drilling Co.*, 890 P.2d 579, 580 n.2 (Alaska 1995).

-----End Footnotes-----

VECO argues that Rosebrock should not have [\*\*31] been able to obtain emotional distress damages. It contends that these were barred by the exclusive remedy provision of the Workers' Compensation Act. n23

-----Footnotes-----

n23 AS 23.30.055.

-----End Footnotes-----

[HN20] *Alaska Statute 22.10.020(i)* authorizes a court finding a violation of any of the provisions of AS 18.80 to award "any other relief including the payment of money, that is appropriate." We have held that this includes an award of compensatory damages. See *Loomis Elec. Protection, Inc. v. Schaefer*, 549 P.2d 1341, 1343 (Alaska 1976).

In *Loomis* we observed that the objective of the antidiscrimination law was to afford complete relief to parties injured by discrimination.

The language of the statute is clearly intended to provide a litigant complete relief in an appropriate case. In view of the strong statement of purpose in enacting AS 18.80, and its avowed determination to protect the civil rights of all Alaska citizens, we believe that the legislature intended to put as many "teeth" into this law as possible. We fail to see [\*\*32] how, consistent with that purpose and intent, the legislature could have contemplated a statutory scheme that would not have included the right to recover damages. Otherwise, there would be many cases in which no meaningful relief would be available to the injured party, the one whose civil rights have been violated and whom the law seeks to protect.

*Id.* at 1343 (footnotes omitted).

The Alaska Workers' Compensation Act does not provide compensation for emotional distress which does not result in permanent or partial disability. It would be inconsistent with the legislative purpose of affording complete relief to those injured by discrimination to hold that nonduplicative damages are barred by the exclusive remedy provision of the Workers' Compensation Act.

In declining to so hold we join the courts of many other states which have held that the exclusive remedy provisions of their workers' compensation laws do not bar intangible injury claims resulting from sexual harassment. See *Hart v. National Mortgage & Land Co.*, 189 Cal. App. 3d 1420, 235 Cal. Rptr. 68, 75 (Cal. App. 1987); *Cox v. Brazo*, 165 Ga. App. 888, 303 S.E.2d 71, 73 (Ga. App. 1983); *O'Connell v. Chasdi*, 400 Mass. 686, 511 N.E.2d 349, 351-52 (Mass. 1987); [\*\*33] *Hogan v. Forsyth Country Club Co.*, 79 N.C. App. 483, 340 S.E.2d 116, 120-21 (N.C. App. 1986); *Palmer v. Bi-Mart Co.*, 92 Ore. App. 470, 758 P.2d 888, 891 (Or. App. 1988).

#### B. Wrongful Termination

1. Did the superior court err by permitting Rosebrock to amend her complaint after the trial had concluded? n24

-----Footnotes-----

n24 [HN21] The superior court is accorded wide discretion in ruling on motions to amend pleadings. See *Rodriguez v. Rodriguez*, 908 P.2d 1007, 1011 (Alaska 1995).

-----End Footnotes-----

Rosebrock's pleadings did not explicitly allege that her wrongful termination claim was brought pursuant to AS 18.80.220(a)(4). n25 Rather, the complaint stated:

[\*918] 20. Plaintiff's termination was wrongful in that she was discharged for asserting her right as an employee to be free from sexual assault and harassment, a right that is of important public interest as reflected in both federal and state statutes and case law.

....

22. Defendant VECO's action in discharging plaintiff for this reason was willful, wanton and malicious and beyond the bounds of socially tolerable [\*\*34] conduct, warranting the assessment of punitive damages against defendant VECO.

-----Footnotes-----

n25 [HN22] AS 18.80.220(a)(4) provides that it is an unlawful employment practice for "an employer, labor organization, or employment agency to discharge, expel, or otherwise discriminate against a person because the person has opposed any practices forbidden under AS 18.80.200-18.80.280 or because the person has filed a complaint, testified, or assisted in a proceeding under this chapter . . . ."

-----End Footnotes-----

In response to VECO's summary judgment motion, the superior court ruled that Rosebrock's wrongful termination claim could proceed to trial. It stated that if she prevailed, Rosebrock would be entitled to "damages for emotional distress and punitive damages, since wrongful termination in violation of public policy constitutes a tort." Thus, the superior court permitted the wrongful termination claim to proceed as a public policy tort. At trial, however, the claim was presented to the jury as a retaliation claim in conformance with the elements [\*\*35] that would be necessary for a wrongful termination claim under AS 18.80.220. Then, after the trial concluded, the superior court permitted a retroactive amendment of Rosebrock's complaint to include a wrongful termination claim under AS 18.80.220. VECO argues that it was unfairly prejudiced by the retroactive amendment of Rosebrock's complaint.

We believe that Rosebrock's pleadings sufficiently placed VECO on notice that it was being sued for wrongful termination, and that punitive damages would be sought. n26 While the superior court did state, in ruling on a summary judgment motion, that the wrongful termination claim would proceed as a public policy tort, the trial, in fact, conformed to a retaliation claim under AS 18.80.220. Additionally, VECO has not established that it was prejudiced by the retroactive amended pleading -- that is, it did not suggest how it might have tried the case differently if it had known throughout the lawsuit that Rosebrock would prosecute her wrongful termination claim under AS 18.80.220. n27 Therefore, we hold that the superior court did not abuse its discretion by allowing the post-trial amendment of Rosebrock's complaint. n28

-----Footnotes-----

n26 See *Knight v. American Guard & Alert, Inc.*, 714 P.2d 788, 791 (Alaska 1986) (stating that pleadings should be construed liberally). [\*\*36]

n27 VECO does claim that it would have pursued a different tactic. However, we are unable to distinguish between the trial tactic that VECO actually used and the tactic that it claims it would have used.

n28 VECO also argues that it was prejudiced if this court rules that AS 18.80.220 does not support punitive damages, since Alaska does not recognize a public policy tort that would serve as an alternative grounds for imposing punitive damages. Since we hold that this statute does authorize awards of punitive damages, see *infra* III.C.1., VECO was not prejudiced. We do not reach the issue of whether a public policy tort should be recognized in the circumstances of this case or whether such a claim would support an award of punitive damages.

-----End Footnotes-----

2. Did the superior court properly instruct the jury as to whether VECO could be held liable for the alleged wrongful termination of Rosebrock?

Quoting only a portion of Jury Instruction Number 21, VECO claims that it is erroneous because it allowed the jury to rule in favor of Rosebrock on her wrongful termination claim by finding only that Rosebrock [\*\*37] demonstrated

that VECO's stated reason for her termination was pretextual. VECO argues that the jury was not required to find that its reason for terminating Rosebrock was retaliatory.

[HN23] In determining whether an employer has violated AS 18.80.220 when there is no direct evidence of discriminatory intent, we have adopted the three-part framework used in Title VII cases. See *Haroldson v. Omni Enterprises, Inc.*, 901 P.2d 426, 430 (Alaska 1995) (citing *McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green*, 411 U.S. 792, 802, 36 L. Ed. 2d 668, 93 S. Ct. 1817 (1973)). This test also governs actions for retaliatory discharge. See *Miller [\*919] v. Fairchild Industries, Inc.*, 797 F.2d 727, 730-31 (9th Cir. 1986).

The Miller court stated:

[HN24]

To establish a prima facie case of discriminatory retaliation, a plaintiff must show that: (1) she engaged in an activity protected under Title VII; (2) her employer subjected her to adverse employment action; (3) there was a causal link between the protected activity and the employer's action. Causation sufficient to establish a prima facie case of unlawful retaliation may be inferred from the proximity in time between the protected action and the allegedly retaliatory discharge. . . .

Once [\*\*38] a plaintiff establishes a prima facie case, the burden of production shifts to the employer to articulate a legitimate, non-retaliatory explanation for the action. . . . To satisfy this burden, the employer "need only produce admissible evidence which would allow the trier of fact rationally to conclude that the employment decision had not been motivated by discriminatory animus."

If the employer successfully rebuts the inference of retaliation that arises from establishment of a prima facie case, then the burden shifts once again to the plaintiff to show that the defendant's proffered explanation is merely a pretext for discrimination.

*Id.* at 731 (citations and footnote omitted) (quoting *Texas, Dep't of Community Affairs v. Burdine*, 450 U.S. 248, 257, 67 L. Ed. 2d 207, 101 S. Ct. 1089 (1981)).

Instruction Number 21, read in its entirety, properly instructed the jury on Rosebrock's wrongful termination claim. n29 The [\*920] jury was instructed that Rosebrock first had to prove facts that gave rise to an inference of wrongful termination -- that "she complained to VECO supervisory or management employees about sexual harassment and/or sexual assault," and that "after she complained of sexual harassment and/or [\*\*39] assault, she was terminated." Next, the instruction informed the jury that VECO had alleged a legitimate, non-discriminatory reason for terminating Rosebrock. Finally, the instruction placed the burden of persuasion on Rosebrock to prove that "it is more likely than not that VECO's real reason for terminating her was the fact that she complained of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault."

-----Footnotes-----

n29 The superior court's instructions in their entirety as they pertain to Rosebrock's wrongful termination claim provide:

Rosebrock's second claim is for wrongful termination. Rosebrock claims that she was terminated in retaliation for complaining of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault. In order to find that Rosebrock was wrongfully terminated, you must find that it is more likely than not that:

- 1) Rosebrock complained about sexual harassment and/or sexual assault;
- 2) VECO terminated Rosebrock; and
- 3) There was a causal connection between Rosebrock's complaints and the termination.

There are two ways that Rosebrock can show that there was a causal connection between her complaints and her lay-off. She may show, first, that VECO's only reason for terminating her was retaliatory. In such case, she must demonstrate that any reason stated by VECO for its actions was merely pretextual, and not true. This is called a "pretext" claim. Second, she may show that even if VECO had a legitimate motive for terminating her, retaliation was also a causal factor in the lay-off. This is called a "mixed motive" claim.

To prevail on either of these claims, Rosebrock must first prove two things. First, she must prove that she complained to VECO supervisory or management employees about sexual harassment and/or sexual assault.

Second, Rosebrock must prove that after she complained of sexual harassment and/or assault, she was terminated.

To prevail on her pretext claim, Rosebrock must next establish that it is more likely than not that VECO's real reason for terminating her was the fact that she complained of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault. VECO claims that it laid Rosebrock off as part of company-wide cost-cutting reductions in force. In managing its affairs, a business is entitled to exercise managerial discretion. This means that even though you think a particular decision is wrong and you would have acted differently had it been up to you, as long as complaints of sexual harassment or sexual assault were not a causal factor in the decision, it is lawful.

You must decide whether VECO's stated reason for Rosebrock's lay-off was "pretextual," or not the true reason for Rosebrock's termination. If you decide that it is more likely than not that VECO's stated reason was pretextual, you must find that Rosebrock has established her claim for wrongful termination.

To prevail on her mixed motive claim, Rosebrock need not establish that her complaints constituted the sole motivation or even the primary motivation for VECO's action. Plaintiff must prove that it is more likely than not that her complaints were a causal factor in her termination, even though VECO may also have been motivated by other factors.

If you find that Rosebrock has proved that her sexual harassment and/or sexual assault complaint was/were motivating factor(s) in her termination, then you must find for Rosebrock on her mixed motive wrongful termination claim, unless you also find that VECO has proved that it is more likely than not that it would have made the same decision, if Rosebrock had not complained of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault. If you find that VECO would have made the same employment decision if Rosebrock had not made her complaint, then you must find for VECO on the mixed motive wrongful termination claim.

The fact that Rosebrock was an "at will" employee who could be terminated without cause does not mean that VECO could terminate Rosebrock because she complained of sexual harassment or sexual assault.

----- -End Footnotes----- [\*\*40]

Contrary to VECO's claim, the instruction did not allow the jury to impose liability based solely on its disbelief of VECO's stated reason for terminating Rosebrock. We therefore hold that when the text of Instruction Number 21 is considered in its entirety, the instruction is not erroneous.

### 3. Did the superior court properly instruct the jury on mixed motives?

VECO claims that Jury Instruction Number 21, as it relates to mixed-motive sexual harassment, is incorrect. Specifically, VECO claims that mixed-motive causation does not apply to cases of retaliation, and also claims that Rosebrock had to choose either a pretext claim or a mixed-motive claim, but could not pursue both simultaneously.

VECO cites no authority for the proposition that consideration of mixed motives is impermissible in wrongful termination retaliation cases. Authority does support the opposite proposition, however. See, e.g., *Ostrowski v. Atlantic Mut. Ins. Cos.*, 968 F.2d 171, 185 (2d Cir. 1992) ("We reject the district court's view that a claim of retaliation necessarily presents only a pretext case and cannot be a mixed-motives case."); see also *Haroldsen*, 901 P.2d at 432 n.12 (noting that [\*\*41] our anti-discrimination laws condemn employment decisions based on a mixture of legitimate and illegitimate considerations).

[HN25] The question of whether a mixed-motive theory applies to wrongful termination depends on the interpretation of the term "because" in AS 18.20.220. n30 In interpreting Title VII, the United States Supreme Court, in *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins*, 490 U.S. 228, 240, 104 L. Ed. 2d 268, 109 S. Ct. 1775 (1989), held that the words "because of . . . sex" mean that "gender must be irrelevant to employment decisions." It emphasized that the words "because of" do not mean "solely because of," and held that Title VII prohibited decisions "based on a mixture of legitimate and illegitimate considerations." *Id.* at 241. The Court then held that if the plaintiff shows that gender was a "motivating part in an employment decision, the defendant may avoid a finding of liability only by proving that it would have made the same decision even if it had not allowed gender to play such a role." *Hopkins*, 490 U.S. at 244-45 (footnote omitted).

-----Footnotes-----

n30 AS 18.80.220(a)(4) provides that it is unlawful for an employer to "discharge, expel, or otherwise discriminate against a person because the person has opposed any practices forbidden under AS 18.80.200-18.80.280 or because the person has filed a complaint, testified, or assisted in a proceeding under this chapter . . ." (Emphasis added.)

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*42]

The analysis that the Supreme Court applied to Title VII sexual discrimination is equally applicable to a wrongful termination claim pursuant to AS 18.20.220(a)(4). In both situations, the employer is prohibited from making an employment decision where an illegitimate consideration is a motivating factor in the decision. Requiring plaintiffs in wrongful termination cases to prove that their termination was caused solely by their protected actions would unnecessarily restrict the term "because," and would hinder achieving the purpose of AS 18.80.220, eradicating discrimination. We therefore hold that a wrongful termination claim pursuant to AS 18.20.220(a)(4) can be based on mixed-motive causation.

We also reject VECO's argument that the plaintiff must choose between pursuing a mixed-motive theory and a pretext theory. The Supreme Court in *Price Waterhouse* held that a plaintiff can assert a mixed-motive [\*921] claim when the employer considered both legitimate and illegitimate reasons in making its employment decision. See 490 U.S. at 241. However, "if the plaintiff fails to satisfy the factfinder that it is more likely than not that a forbidden characteristic played a part in the [\*\*43] employment decision, then she may prevail only if she proves . . . that the employer's stated reason for its decision is pretextual." *Id.* at 247 n.12.

Thus, *Price Waterhouse* does explicitly contemplate that a plaintiff can pursue a mixed-motive claim and a pretext claim simultaneously. There is no reason to make the plaintiff elect which theory to present to the jury. If the jury finds that there is direct evidence that the employer considered a forbidden characteristic in terminating the plaintiff, it will apply the mixed-motive framework. However, if the jury does not find direct evidence, the plaintiff can still prevail by using the pretextual framework. We thus hold that a plaintiff can present both mixed-motive and pretext claims to the jury, and reject VECO's argument that Rosebrock had a forbidden "second bite at the apple."

4. Did the superior court err in denying VECO's motions for JNOV and for a new trial on Rosebrock's wrongful termination claim?

VECO claims that Rosebrock failed to offer evidence which would prove the elements of her wrongful termination claim. Specifically, VECO argues that Rosebrock failed to establish a prima facie case of retaliation [\*\*44] because she failed to show: (1) that she engaged in a protected activity; (2) that an adverse employment decision was made; and (3) that there was a causal connection between the two.

First, Rosebrock testified that she complained to a supervisor, Bobby Clark, that she was sexually assaulted by another VECO employee. n31 VECO offers no support for the proposition that VECO would have been justified for terminating her for complaining about such an assault. Nor does VECO claim or offer any support for the proposition that such a report was not a protected activity. Therefore, Rosebrock offered sufficient evidence to demonstrate that she engaged in a protected activity.

-----Footnotes-----

n31 Bobby Clark served as the alternate equipment manager when Rick Rorick was away from the North Slope.

-----End Footnotes-----

Second, VECO claims that it did not take adverse employment action against Rosebrock. However, Rosebrock was laid off. Therefore, there is no real dispute that VECO made an adverse employment decision against Rosebrock.

Finally, VECO claims [\*\*45] that there was no causal connection between Rosebrock's complaint and her termination, and that Rosebrock was laid off as part of a general reduction in force because she was a junior office worker. However, Rosebrock testified that, following her termination, she spoke to a VECO employee who told her that VECO had "taken care of the problem" because "you're gone." Also, Rosebrock was laid off about six days after she

complained, which in context of Rosebrock's "you're gone" testimony, is inferential evidence of a causal connection. See *Miller*, 797 F.2d at 731 (stating that causation can be proved by inference from a close proximity in time between the protected activity and the allegedly retaliatory discharge); see also Mack A. Player, *Employment Discrimination Law* § 5.48, at 404 n.284 (1988).

Reviewing this evidence in the light most favorable to Rosebrock, we find that the jury could reasonably have found that Rosebrock's complaint about the sexual assault was a cause of her termination. We thus affirm the superior court's denial of VECO's motions for JNOV and a new trial as to Rosebrock's wrongful termination claim.

### C. Punitive Damages

1. Are punitive damages [\*\*46] authorized under AS 18.80.220 and AS 22.10.020(i)? n32

-----Footnotes-----

n32 Statutory interpretation is a question of law which this court reviews using its independent judgment. See *Huf v. Arctic Alaska Drilling Co.*, 890 P.2d 579, 580 n.2 (Alaska 1995).

-----End Footnotes-----

VECO claims that Rosebrock cannot recover punitive damages under Alaska's [\*922] anti-discrimination statute, AS 18.80.220. However, in *Loomis Electronic Protection, Inc. v. Schaefer*, 549 P.2d 1341, 1343 (Alaska 1976), this court stated that plaintiffs may recover punitive damages under AS 18.80. We stated that [HN26]

the broad language of AS 22.10.020(c) indicates a legislative intent to authorize an award of compensatory and punitive damages for violations of AS 18.80, in addition to the equitable remedies such as enjoining illegal employment activities and ordering back pay as a form of restitution. n33

Id.; see also *Johnson v. Alaska State Dept. of Fish & Game*, 836 P.2d 896, 906 (Alaska 1991) (citing *Loomis* for the proposition that AS 22.10.020(c) [\*\*47] authorizes punitive damages for violations of AS 18.80, but holding that the statute did not specifically allow punitive damages against the state).

-----Footnotes-----

n33 AS 22.10.020(c) was subsequently codified as AS 22.10.020(i). It provides in relevant part:

The [superior] court may enjoin any act, practice, or policy which is illegal under AS 18.80, and may order any other relief, including the payment of money, that is appropriate.

-----End Footnotes-----

Nevertheless, VECO claims that this court's statements in *Loomis* and *Johnson* were merely dicta, and that we should reconsider the question of punitive damages. Specifically, VECO claims that the issue in *Loomis* concerned whether a prospective employee was entitled to a jury trial, and that the language regarding punitive damages is therefore superfluous. It also argues that in *Johnson*, we simply assumed that punitive damages were recoverable, but never decided the propriety of such damages.

While VECO accurately summarizes the question presented in *Loomis*, we [\*\*48] think that VECO is incorrect in claiming that the punitive damage reference is mere dicta. Dicta is defined as "opinions of a judge which do not embody the resolution or determination of the specific case before the court. Expressions in court's opinion which go beyond the facts before court and therefore are individual views of author of opinion and not binding in subsequent cases as legal precedent." *Black's Law Dictionary* 454 (6th ed. 1990). In *Loomis*, this court's discussion of the relief afforded by Alaska's civil rights statute was necessary for our holding that the prospective employee was entitled to a jury trial. See 549 P.2d at 1343. The language was not superfluous to the "specific case before the court," and did not "go beyond the facts." Similarly, in *Johnson*, we necessarily accepted the holding in *Loomis* that punitive damages were recoverable pursuant to AS 18.80 before reaching the issue of whether punitive damages could be assessed against the state. See 836 P.2d at 906.

[HN27] The plain language of AS 22.10.020(i) authorizes the superior court to award "any other relief, including the payment of money." Further, in a consistent line of decisions, [\*\*49] this court has held that punitive damages are recoverable in discrimination cases. See *Loomis*, 549 P.2d at 1343; *Johnson*, 836 P.2d at 906; cf. *McDaniel v. Cory*, 631 P.2d 82, 87 (Alaska 1981) (affirming holding in *Loomis* that punitive damages are available in civil action, but distinguishing administrative action where punitive damages are not available). Moreover, under the common law, Alaska's superior courts possess the authority to award punitive damages for outrageous conduct. See *Bridges v. Alaska Hous. Auth.*, 375 P.2d 696, 702 (Alaska 1962). Allowing punitive damages under AS 18.80.220 does not reach beyond settled expectations. We therefore follow our prior holdings that punitive damages are authorized under AS 18.80.220 and AS 22.10.020(i).

2. Did the jury instructions err in permitting the jury to award punitive damages against VECO for acts of a supervisor beyond the scope of the supervisor's employment?

VECO claims that the superior court's instruction on punitive damages was erroneous because it allowed the jury to award punitive damages based on vicarious liability. Citing Restatement (Second) of Agency § 217C (1958), it argues that this court [\*\*50] should apply agency principles to limit the award of punitive damages to instances where the employer has committed a wrong.

[\*923] The jury instructions allowed the jury to award punitive damages against VECO based on four different theories of employer liability: (1) wrongfully terminating Rosebrock; (2) sexual harassment by an employee acting within the scope of his employment if VECO knew about the harassment and failed to take corrective action; (3) sexual harassment by a co-worker or supervisor who did not have authority over Rosebrock, if Rosebrock's supervisor knew about the harassment and failed to take corrective action; and (4) vicarious liability for sexual harassment by Rosebrock's supervisor, unlimited by the scope of the supervisor's employment.

The jury found that VECO was liable for both wrongful termination and sexual harassment and awarded punitive damages. No special verdict answer specified whether punitive damages were awarded for the wrongful termination or the sexual harassment claims, or for both. Thus, it is possible that the jury's award of punitive damages could have been based solely on VECO's vicarious liability for actions of Rorick outside the scope of his [\*\*51] employment.

We must now determine whether an employer can be liable for punitive damages based solely on vicarious liability for its employees' actions outside the scope of their employment. n34

-----Footnotes-----

n34 We have indicated that an employer is vicariously liable for punitive damages for acts of employees within the scope of their employment. See *Alaskan Village, Inc. v. Smalley*, 720 P.2d 945, 948-49 (Alaska 1986) (holding owner of mobile home park liable for punitive damages for acts of managers within the scope of their employment) (citing *Stroud v. Denny's Restaurant*, 271 Ore. 430, 532 P.2d 790, 793 (Or. 1975)); cf. *Murray v. Feight*, 741 P.2d 1148, 1158-59 (Alaska 1987) (holding defendant liable for punitive damages for act of partner in the ordinary course of partnership business). Our holding today concerns vicarious liability for acts of employees outside of the scope of their employment.

-----End Footnotes-----

Restatement (Second) of Agency § 217C provides:

Punitive damages can properly be awarded against a master or other principal [\*\*52] because of an act by an agent if, but only if:

- (a) the principal authorized the doing and the manner of the act, or
- (b) the agent was unfit and the principal was reckless in employing him, or
- (c) the agent was employed in a managerial capacity and was acting in the scope of employment, or
- (d) the principal or a managerial agent of the principal ratified or approved the act.

The comments to section 909 of the Restatement (Second) of Torts, which is identical to section 217C of the Restatement (Second) of Agency, provide:

The rule stated in this Section results from the reasons for awarding punitive damages, which make it improper ordinarily to award punitive damages against one who himself is personally innocent and therefore liable only vicariously. It is, however, within the general spirit of the rule to make liable an employer who has recklessly employed or retained a servant or employee . . . . Nor is it unjust that a person on whose account another has acted should be responsible for an outrageous act for which he otherwise would not be if, with full knowledge of the act and the way in which it was done, he ratifies it, or, in cases in which he would be liable for the [\*\*53] act but not subject to punitive damages, he expresses approval of it. In these cases, punitive damages are granted primarily because of the principal's own wrongful conduct.

Although there has been no fault on the part of a corporation or other employer, if a person acting in a managerial capacity either does an outrageous act or approves of the act by a subordinate, the imposition of punitive damages upon the employer serves as a deterrent to the employment of unfit persons for important positions.

Restatement (Second) of Torts § 909 cmt. b (1979) (emphasis added) (illustrations omitted).

We generally agree with VECO that the Restatement properly balances the interests in imposing vicarious liability while precluding punitive damages when the employer has not acted wrongfully. Other courts which have used agency principles to impose vicarious [\*924] liability on an employer for its supervisor's hostile environment sexual harassment have also limited the employer's punitive damage liability based on the agency principles enunciated in § 217C of the Restatement (Second) of Agency. See, e.g., *Kelly-Zurian v. Wohl Shoe Co.*, 22 Cal. App. 4th 397, 27 Cal. Rptr. 2d 457, 468-69 (Cal. App. 1994) [\*\*54] (holding that employer is not liable for punitive damages based on supervisor's sexual harassment unless the employer acted wrongfully, as defined by Restatement (Second) of Torts § 909); *Lehmann v. Toys 'R' Us, Inc.*, 132 N.J. 587, 626 A.2d 445, 464 (N.J. 1993) (applying agency principles to hold employer vicariously liable for supervisor's hostile environment sexual harassment, but limiting liability for punitive damages to situations of actual participation by upper management or willful indifference).

We have indicated that liability for punitive damages might be imposed in one situation where the Restatement would not impose them -- where an employee who is not necessarily employed in a managerial capacity acts within the scope of his employment. See *Alaskan Village, Inc. v. Smalley*, 720 P.2d 945, 948-49 (Alaska 1986); cf. *Murray v. Feight*, 741 P.2d 1148, 1158-59 (Alaska 1987). We decline, however, to extend this exception and allow vicarious liability for punitive damages when the employee is acting outside the scope of his employment. n35

-----Footnotes-----

n35 In *Smalley* we adopted the majority rule for an employer's vicarious liability for punitive damages, relying on *Stroud v. Denny's Restaurant, Inc.*, 271 Ore. 430, 532 P.2d 790, 793 (Oregon 1975). The rule as expressed in *Stroud* requires that the employee be acting within the scope of his employment:

[HN28]

When an employee commits a wrongful act which would subject him personally to punitive damages, the essential inquiry must be whether the act was committed while the employee was acting within the scope of his employment . . . . If the employee was acting within the scope of his employment, the corporation will be liable for punitive damages regardless of whether that employee may be classified as "menial."

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*55] [HN29]

If an employee is acting outside the scope of his employment, he is not acting in any way to further the goals of the employer. See Restatement (Second) of Agency § 228(1)(c) (providing that employee is not acting within the scope of his employment unless his actions are "actuated, at least in part, by a purpose to serve the master"). n36 The interest of preventing sexual harassment is served by holding an employer vicariously liable for its supervisors' sexual harassment, regardless of whether they are acting within the scope of their employment, because the employer may be deterred from delegating authority to untrained or incompetent supervisors. However, this does not mean that an innocent employer should be punished by an award of punitive damages when its supervisors are acting outside the scope of their employment. Punitive damages are disfavored and are allowed only within narrow limits. See *Chizmar v. Mackie*, 896

*P.2d 196, 210 (Alaska 1995)*. The instructions given in this case went beyond those limits in permitting punitive damages to be awarded based on vicarious liability for acts of employees outside the scope of their employment.

-----Footnotes-----

n36 In *Doe v. Samaritan Counseling Center*, 791 P.2d 344, 348 (Alaska 1990), we stated the "motivation to serve" test would be satisfied "where tortious conduct arises out of and is reasonably incidental to the employee's legitimate work activities". To the extent that this language suggests that the employee's act need not be motivated in fact at least to some degree to serve the master's business we disapprove of it. Doe was a patient whose counselor had consensual sex with her. The question was whether the employer of the counselor could be vicariously liable for the abuse of the patient-counselor relationship. We held that there was a question of fact as to whether the counselor had acted within the scope of his employment. We did not mention the possibility of vicarious liability under an aided in agency theory like that contained in section 219(2)(d) of the Restatement (Second) of Agency which would be applicable regardless of scope of employment considerations. On reflection, vicarious liability under such a theory would seem to be justified. And imposing vicarious liability under a scope of employment theory absent at least a partial purpose on the part of the employee to serve the employer seems unjustified.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*56] [HN30]

When a jury award may be based on any one of several theories, one of which has been erroneously submitted to the jury, a new trial is required. See *Matomco Oil Co. v. Arctic Mechanical, Inc.*, 796 P.2d 1336, 1343-44 (Alaska 1990). This rule applies here, for there is no means for determining [\*925] whether the punitive damage award was based on the direct liability theories which would support the award or on the vicarious liability theory which would not support the award.

### 3. Did VECO properly object to the punitive damage instruction?

[HN31] Civil Rule 51(a) provides that "no party may assign as error the giving or the failure to give an instruction unless the party objects thereto . . . stating distinctly the matter to which the party objects and the grounds of the objection." We now address whether VECO satisfied this rule with respect to punitive damages for vicarious liability.

The superior court gave a substantially similar instruction on punitive damages as that submitted by VECO. n37 This instruction did not inform the jury that it could not impose punitive damages based on vicarious liability for acts of supervisors beyond the scope of their employment. However, VECO objected [\*\*57] to the instruction which stated that it could be held vicariously liable for the acts of its supervisors. VECO's counsel referred to its "running objection", referring to its prior arguments on this point.

-----Footnotes-----

n37 Instruction No. 31 states:

Rosebrock has requested that you award a separate amount of money in order to punish VECO and to deter VECO and others from repeating similar acts. You may award such an amount of money only if you have decided that VECO is liable on one or more of Rosebrock's claims, and if you decide that VECO's conduct which forms the basis of your verdict was outrageous. VECO's conduct was outrageous if it was the result of maliciousness, bad motive, or was undertaken with a reckless indifference to Rosebrock's interests and rights.

Rosebrock must prove the outrageousness of VECO's conduct by clear and convincing evidence. An alleged fact is established by clear and convincing evidence if the evidence induces belief in your minds that the alleged fact is highly probable. It is not necessary that the alleged fact be certainly true or true beyond a reasonable doubt or conclusively true. However, it is not enough to show that the alleged fact is more likely than not true.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*58]

VECO clearly asserted its position that it could not be vicariously liable for sexual harassment. But it did not state that this objection applied to punitive damages. In our view, such a statement was not necessary in order to preserve its

appellate rights. VECO's objection to vicarious liability was inclusive of all forms of damages. Liability for punitive damages was subsumed within its objection.

IV. CCNCLUSION

The judgment of the superior court is AFFIRMED as to compensatory damages, REVERSED as to punitive damages, and REMANDED for a new trial where the issues will be whether punitive damages should be assessed against VECO and, if so, the amount of such damages. n38

-----Footnotes-----

n38 VECO has raised numerous evidentiary objections. We have reviewed each of them and find that the rulings complained of were either correct or, if erroneous, harmless in that they did not affect VECO's substantial rights. VECO also claims that Rose-brock's attorney violated professional standards in his closing argument. However, as no objection was made to this conduct, we regard it as waived. We have reviewed the conduct under a plain error standard and find that plain error does not exist. Finally, VECO claims that it was entitled to exercise a peremptory challenge to the trial judge under Civil Rule 42(c) after a co-defendant had already made a Rule 42(c) challenge. VECO argues that its interests were hostile to those of the co-defendant, but it did not make this argument below. We therefore consider the point to be waived.

Rosebrock's cross-appeal was based on a discovery sanction issue which was relevant only to proving liability for wrongful termination. Since we affirm the judgment of liability, we do not reach the cross-appeal.

-----End Footnotes----- [\*\*59]

Supreme Court of Alaska.

The ALASKAN VILLAGE, INC., Appellant,  
v.  
Mary SMALLEY, for and on Behalf of Monica  
SMALLEY, an infant, Appellee.

No. S-928.

June 13, 1986.

Rehearing Denied July 11, 1986.

An unemancipated minor child brought suit against a mobile home park owner seeking to recover damages for injuries sustained when she was attacked by a tenant's dogs. The Superior Court, Third Judicial District, Anchorage, Milton M. Souter, J., entered judgment in favor of the child, and the owner appealed. The Supreme Court, Burke, J., held that: (1) owner of mobile home park, which undertook to control pets on the trailer park premises by the lease provision prohibiting tenants from keeping vicious dogs and requiring tenant to immediately remove annoying pets, had a duty to protect others from injury from tenant's dogs, and (2) acts of mobile home park's managers were attributable to the park owner and therefore the park owner was liable for punitive damages where the managers, who disregarded numerous complaints by other tenants, acted with reckless indifference to safety of a child.

Affirmed.

West Headnotes

[1] Animals ⇨72  
28k72

Owner of mobile home park, which undertook to control pets on the trailer park premises by the lease provision prohibiting tenants from keeping vicious dogs and requiring tenant to immediately remove annoying pets, had a duty to protect others from injury from tenant's dogs.

[2] Damages ⇨91(1)  
115k91(1)

Jury may award punitive damages if a defendant acts with reckless indifference to a plaintiff's safety.

[3] Appeal and Error ⇨1004(11)  
30k1004(11)  
(Formerly 30k1004.1(10))

Award of punitive damages will be reversed only if reviewing court has a firm conviction based on the record as a whole that trial court erred and that it must intervene to prevent a miscarriage of justice.

[4] Principal and Agent ⇨159(1)  
308k159(1)

Acts of mobile home park's managers were attributable to the park owner and therefore the park owner was liable for punitive damages where the managers, who disregarded numerous complaints by other tenants, acted with reckless indifference to safety of a child tenant who sustained injuries when she was attacked by a tenant's dogs.

[5] Courts ⇨100(1)  
106k100(1)

Absent special circumstances, a new rule of law will apply in the case before the court and in all subsequent cases; however, rule may apply purely prospectively if the rule is one of first impression, or overrules prior law and was not foreshadowed by prior decisions, defendant justifiably relied on prior interpretations, undue hardship would result, and the purpose and effect of the holding is best served by a purely prospective application.

[6] Courts ⇨100(1)  
106k100(1)

Rule of prospectivity did not invalidate punitive damages award assessed against mobile home park's owner for failure to protect child from injury from a tenant's dogs where the imposition of a duty on the owner was foreshadowed by a prior decision, the decision imposing the duty did not overrule established precedent or prior interpretations upon which the owner justifiably relied and where the owner failed to demonstrate undue hardship.

[7] Damages ⇨94  
115k94

Punitive damage award is excessive if it is

manifestly unreasonable, resulting from passion or prejudice or disregard of the rules of law; relevant factors include compensatory damage amount, magnitude of defense, importance of the policy violated, and defendant's wealth.

[8] Animals ⇨74(6)  
28k74(6)

Punitive damage award of \$550,000 was not excessive in suit in which child recovered \$235,000 in compensatory damages for injuries sustained as a result of violation of mobile home park owner's duty to protect her from injury from a tenant's dogs.

[9] Infants ⇨72(2)  
211k72(2)

[9] Parent and Child ⇨7(1)  
285k7(1)

As a rule, a parent has primary right of action for past medical expenses incurred on behalf of an unemancipated minor child; however, parent may impliedly waive her right to recover in favor of the child by failing to object when child sues for those expenses or by testifying on child's behalf.

[10] Parent and Child ⇨7(1)  
285k7(1)

Mother impliedly waived her right to recover past medical expenses incurred on behalf of unemancipated minor child by allowing the child to assert the claim and by testifying on her behalf.

[11] Judgment ⇨306  
228k306

Errors in prejudgment interest and cost award were clerical and therefore trial court did not abuse its discretion in changing those amounts. Rules Civ.Proc., Rule 60(a).

[12] Judgment ⇨386(1)  
228k386(1)

Motion to relieve a party from judgment for an error of law must be brought within 30 days after entry of judgment; however, court may relax that time limit in interest of justice. Rules Civ.Proc., Rules 60(b), 94.

[13] Judgment ⇨304  
228k304

[13] Judgment ⇨321  
228k321

Trial court's failure to include exemplary award in its computation of attorney fees was a legal error and trial court did not abuse its discretion in relaxing the time limit in the interests of justice to amend the judgment to grant attorney fees on the award. Rules Civ.Proc., Rules 60(b), 82(a), 94.

\*946 Paul W. Waggoner, Paul W. Waggoner, Inc., Anchorage, for appellant.

L. Ames Luce, Jeri D. Byers, Law Offices of L. Ames Luce, Anchorage, for appellee.

Before RABINOWITZ, C.J., and BURKE, MATTHEWS, COMPTON and MOORE, JJ.

#### OPINION

BURKE, Justice.

The primary issue in this appeal is the extent of a mobile home park owner's duty to protect others from injury from a tenant's dogs. The jury returned a verdict for Monica Smalley, who was injured by a tenant's dogs, holding the park owner liable for compensatory and punitive damages. The park owner appeals, claiming that it owed no duty of care to Smalley and challenging the damage award and several evidentiary rulings. We affirm.

#### I. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

Monica Smalley, a six-year-old child, and Henry Scepurek were neighboring tenants of The Alaskan Village, Inc. (Village), an Anchorage trailer park. Scepurek's rental agreement with Village includes a comprehensive set of rules and regulations. Paragraph 1 of these rules states that the tenancy is terminable on thirty-days notice. Paragraph 4 prohibits the tenant from keeping vicious dogs or more than one dog. Paragraph 23 states that a renter's failure to obey the rules is grounds to cancel the rental agreement.

When Scepurek moved in, he obtained a pet permit

from Village allowing him to keep two chihuahuas. In the permit, Scepurek promised to remove the pets from the premises immediately upon notice that they annoyed other tenants.

\*947 At some point, subsequent to obtaining the permit, Scepurek acquired two Staffordshire terriers, commonly called pit bulls. On June 12, 1983, these dogs climbed out of their pen in Scepurek's yard, pulled Smalley from a swing set, and mauled her. She was severely bitten on her face, neck and arm.

Smalley sued Village for compensatory and punitive damages for their negligence. [FN1] Following trial, the jury returned a special verdict finding that Village's negligence was a proximate cause of Smalley's injury and that Smalley suffered \$235,000 in compensatory damages. The jury also found that Village was guilty of reckless indifference to the safety of others and assessed \$550,000 punitive damages. Judge Milton M. Souter entered final judgment against Village according to the special verdict. The court later amended its judgment due to errors in the original judgment. [FN2]

FN1. Smalley also sued Scepurek, Sandra Zartmann (who owned the dogs), the Municipality of Anchorage, and Stanley Smith Security, Inc.

FN2. The errors involved mistakes in computing statutory prejudgment interest and attorney's fees.

Village appeals, arguing (1) it had no duty to protect Smalley, (2) punitive damages and past medical expenses should not have been awarded, and (3) the court erred in amending its original judgment. [FN3]

FN3. Village also challenged the admission and exclusion of certain evidence. Its evidentiary arguments are meritless.

## II. VILLAGE'S DUTY TO PROTECT SMALLEY

Village argues that it had no duty to Smalley because the attack occurred in Scepurek's yard, an area over which Village had no control, and because Scepurek acquired the dogs after he moved in. Smalley contends that Village had a duty to use reasonable care to enforce its rules, and a duty to

exercise reasonable care under these circumstances.

The Restatement (Second) of Torts § 323 (1965) imposes liability on a defendant that negligently performs an undertaking to render services:

One who undertakes, gratuitously or for consideration, to render services to another which he should recognize as necessary for the protection of the other's person or things, is subject to liability to the other for physical harm resulting from his failure to exercise reasonable care to perform his undertaking, if

(a) his failure to exercise such care increases the risk of such harm, or

(b) the harm is suffered because of the other's reliance upon the undertaking.

We have relied on this principle to establish a duty of care in a variety of factual situations. For example, a city which undertakes to provide police protection to its residents has a duty to exercise reasonable care in providing those services. *City of Kotzebue v. McLean*, 702 P.2d 1309, 1312-13 (Alaska 1985). Similarly, a defendant that voluntarily supplies a ladder for access between a tugboat and a dock is under a duty to exercise some degree of care toward those using the ladder. *Williams v. Municipality of Anchorage*, 633 P.2d 248, 251 (Alaska 1981). Finally, if the state voluntarily conducts building fire safety inspections, it must exercise reasonable care in conducting the inspection and abating known fire hazards. *Adams v. State*, 555 P.2d 235, 240-41 (Alaska 1976). However, evidence that the undertaking is for the plaintiff's benefit is a prerequisite to liability; a plaintiff who does not produce such evidence is not entitled to a jury instruction on this theory. *McLinn v. Kodiak Electric Ass'n*, 546 P.2d 1305, 1309 n.8 (Alaska 1976).

In *City of Kotzebue v. McLean*, 702 P.2d at 1313-15, we relied on the analytical factors adopted in *D.S.W. v. Fairbanks North Star Borough School District*, 628 P.2d 554 (Alaska 1981): (1) the foreseeability of harm to plaintiff, (2) the degree of certainty that plaintiff suffered injury, (3) the connection between defendant's conduct \*948 and plaintiff's injury, (4) the moral blame attached to defendant's conduct, (5) the policy of preventing future harm, (6) the burden on the defendant and consequences to the community of imposing the duty, and (7) the availability, cost and prevalence of insurance for the risk. *Id.* at 555. We consider

these factors to determine whether an actionable duty of care exists under the particular circumstances.

[1] Applying these principles to the instant case, we conclude that Village had a duty to exercise reasonable care to enforce its rules and regulations. (1) There was ample evidence that Village had actual knowledge of prior incidents involving Scephrek's dogs, and therefore it was clearly foreseeable that a person such as Smalley might be harmed; (2) Smalley suffered injury; (3) her injuries are closely related to Village's failure to take any action to enforce its rules; (4) Village's blatant disregard of its tenants' safety is morally blameworthy; (5) our policy is to encourage owners to enforce their rules to prevent harm to others lawfully on the premises; (6) the burden on owners of enforcing their own rules is not onerous; and (7) owners may obtain insurance or require tenants who own vicious animals to do so.

Village undertook to control pets on the trailer park premises by the lease provision prohibiting tenants from keeping vicious dogs and requiring Scephrek to immediately remove annoying pets. One of the trailer park managers agreed that he had "an obligation to enforce the rules ... concerning pets for the safety and well-being of the tenants in that park." [Tr. 465] Smalley was entitled to rely on Village to perform its duty.

The court instructed the jury that Village is under a duty to exercise ordinary care in the enforcement of its rules and regulations providing for effective animal control in order to avoid exposing persons in the park to an unreasonable risk of harm. A failure to fulfill this duty, resulting in exposing persons to an unreasonable risk of harm, would be negligence.

This instruction is a correct statement of the law.

Given our conclusion that Village undertook the obligation to control vicious dogs in its trailer park, we do not reach Smalley's argument that a landlord has a more general duty of reasonable care under the circumstances presented here. See *Uccello v. Laudenslayer*, 118 Cal.Rptr. 741, 746-47, 44 Cal.App.3d 628, 118 Cal.Rptr. 741 (1975); *Strunk v. Zoltanski*, 62 N.Y.2d 572, 479 N.Y.S.2d 175, 176-178, 468 N.E.2d 13, 14-15 (1984); *Palermo v. Nails*, 334 Pa.Super. 544, 483 A.2d 871 (1984).

### III. EXEMPLARY DAMAGES

Village argues that, even if compensatory damages were justified, it is not liable for punitive damages resulting from the conduct of others, it did not violate a clear duty, and the award was excessive. Smalley contends that the \$550,000 award was justified. The court instructed the jury that it could assess punitive damages if it found Village guilty of reckless indifference.

[2][3] A jury may award punitive damages if a defendant acts with reckless indifference to a plaintiff's safety; the purpose of punitive damages is to punish the wrongdoer and prevent similar conduct in the future. *Sturm, Ruger & Co. v. Day*, 594 P.2d 38, 46-48 (Alaska 1979), modified, 615 P.2d 621 (Alaska 1980), modified, 627 P.2d 204 (Alaska 1981), cert. denied, 454 U.S. 894, 102 S.Ct. 391, 70 L.Ed.2d 209 (1981), overruled on other grounds, *Dura Corp. v. Harned*, 703 P.2d 396, 405 n.5 (Alaska 1985). We will reverse the award only if we have a firm conviction based on the record as a whole that the trial court erred and we must intervene to prevent a miscarriage of justice. *Id.*

[4] Village can be held liable for punitive damages based on the actions of its employees. The Oregon Supreme Court recently adopted the majority rule that if a tort by an employee renders the employer liable for compensatory damages and the employee's actions justify a punitive damage \*949 award, then the employer is liable for punitive damages, whether or not the employer authorized or ratified the tortious conduct. *Stroud v. Denny's Restaurant*, 271 Or. 430, 532 P.2d 790, 793 (1975). Under the reasoning of this rule, Village is liable for punitive damages if (1) the actions of its managers subject Village to liability for compensatory damages and (2) the managers acted with reckless indifference to Smalley's safety.

We conclude that the trial court correctly instructed the jury that the acts of Elaine Seegers, Curtis Johnson and Jean Bailey, the park managers, are attributable to Village as a matter of law, therefore their actions may subject Village to liability for compensatory damages. [FN4] The jury specifically found that Village acted with reckless indifference to the safety of others. Therefore, Village is liable for

punitive damages under the majority rule as stated by the Oregon Supreme Court.

FN4. Village argues that it is liable for the acts of its managers only if an agency relationship exists, and that this presents a question of fact. The trial court ruled, as a matter of law, that the acts of Seegers, Johnson and Bailey are the acts of Village.

Seegers, Johnson and Bailey were employees of Olympic, Inc. Olympic is the major shareholder of Village. There is testimony in the record that Bailey, Johnson and Seegers were hired to manage Village at different times. The question whether they acted outside the scope of their employment was not raised at trial.

Village also argues that it should not be liable for punitive damages because it did not violate an unambiguous duty to Smalley. Therefore, it contends, punitive damages would only be appropriate in later cases.

[5] Absent special circumstances, a new rule of law will apply in the case before the court and in all subsequent cases. *Plumley v. Hale*, 594 P.2d 497, 502-03 (Alaska 1979). However, the rule may apply purely prospectively if (1) the rule is one of first impression, or overrules prior law and was not foreshadowed by prior decisions, (2) defendant justifiably relied on prior interpretations, (3) undue hardship would result, and (4) the purpose and effect of the holding is best served by a purely prospective application. *Id.* In *State v. Haley*, 687 P.2d 305, 320 (Alaska 1984), we held that the trial court did not err in refusing to submit the question of punitive damages to the jury where plaintiff's constitutional right to free expression was not so clearly defined that her employer was recklessly indifferent to her constitutional rights when he terminated her employment.

[6] We conclude that the rule of prospectivity does not invalidate the exemplary award in this case. The imposition of a duty on Village was foreshadowed by our decisions applying Section 323 of the Restatement (Second) of Torts and the *D.S.W.* factors, 628 P.2d at 555. Today's decision does not overrule established precedent or prior interpretations upon which Village justifiably relied. Village has demonstrated no undue hardship and the purpose of our holding is best served by application in the instant case. Smalley's right to personal

safety is very clearly defined; Village's disregard of numerous complaints by other tenants supports the jury's finding of reckless indifference.

[7] In addition, Village argues that the amount of punitive damages was excessive. A punitive damage award is excessive if it is manifestly unreasonable, resulting from passion or prejudice or disregard of the rules of law. *American National Watermattress v. Manville*, 642 P.2d 1330, 1340 (Alaska 1982). Relevant factors include the compensatory damage amount, magnitude of the offense, importance of the policy violated, and the defendant's wealth. *Sturm, Ruger & Co.*, 594 P.2d at 47-48.

[8] We do not believe that the \$550,000 exemplary award is excessive. Compensatory damages were \$235,000, so there is a reasonable relation between compensatory and punitive damages.

#### IV. PAST MEDICAL EXPENSES

Village argues that an unemancipated minor has no right to recover compensatory \*950 damages for past medical expenses, and therefore Smalley's compensatory award should be reduced.

[9] As a rule, a parent has the primary right of action for past medical expenses incurred on behalf of an unemancipated minor child. *Lasselle v. Special Products Co.*, 677 P.2d 483, 486-87 (Idaho 1983); *Palmore v. Kirkman Laboratories*, 527 P.2d 391, 396-97 (Or.1974). However, the parent may impliedly waive her right to recover in favor of the child by failing to object when the child sues for those expenses or by testifying on the child's behalf. *Lasselle*, 677 P.2d at 486-87. See also Annot. 32 A.L.R.2d 1060 (1953).

[10] Mary Smalley (Monica's mother) initially asserted a claim on her own behalf for negligent infliction of emotional distress which did not mention past medical expenses. However, *Monica* claimed she incurred past medical expenses. The parties later stipulated that Mary's claim for emotional distress would be dismissed with prejudice.

We conclude that Monica is entitled to recover past medical expenses. Although Mary had the primary right to recover those expenses, she impliedly

waived her right in favor of Monica by allowing Monica to assert the claim and by testifying on her behalf. The only damages barred by the stipulated dismissal are those for Mary's emotional distress, the only claim asserted by Mary.

#### V. AMENDING THE ORIGINAL JUDGMENT

Judge Souter signed the final judgment on January 25; it was mailed to Smalley's counsel on February 26 and received on March 1. Village appealed on March 20. Smalley's counsel discovered several errors around March 25 and moved to modify the judgment on April 8. Judge Souter signed an amended judgment on June 27.

The amended judgment (1) decreased the prejudgment interest awarded from December 1984 to January 1985 from \$4,200 to \$2,071.08, (2) decreased the cost award by one cent, and (3) increased the attorney's fee award from \$24,994.76 to \$79,781.88. The original judgment contains an arithmetical error and the total is erroneously stated as \$586,581.22; the original awards actually total \$828,028.83. The amended judgment totals \$880,687.01.

Village contends that Judge Souter erred by amending the judgment to correct an error of law more than thirty days after it was distributed. Smalley argues that relaxation of the rules was proper to avoid injustice.

[11] Clerical mistakes in judgments may be corrected by the court at any time. Civil Rule 60(a). [FN5] We believe that the errors in the prejudgment interest and cost award were clerical, therefore the trial court did not abuse its discretion in changing those amounts.

FN5. Alaska R.Civ.P. 60(a) provides in part: Clerical mistakes in judgments ... and errors therein arising from oversight or omission may be corrected by the court at any time of its own initiative or on the motion of any party....

[12] Civil Rule 60(b) permits the court to relieve a party from judgment for an error of law. [FN6] See *Cleary Diving Service v. Thomas, Head and Greisen*, 688 P.2d 940, 942 (Alaska 1984); *Alaska Truck Transport v. Berman Packing*, 469 P.2d 697, 699 (Alaska 1970). Such a motion must be brought within thirty days after entry of judgment, so that Civil Rule 60(b) is not used to circumvent the thirty day \*951 time limit for filing an appeal. *Alaska Truck Transport*, 469 P.2d at 699-700. However, the court may relax this time limit in the interests of justice. *Id.*; Alaska R.Civ.P. 94. The standard of review is abuse of discretion. *Cleary Diving Service*, 688 P.2d at 942.

FN6. Alaska R.Civ.P. 60(b) provides in part: On motion and upon such terms as are just, the court may relieve a party or his legal representative from a final judgment ... for the following reasons: (1) mistake, inadvertence, surprise or excusable neglect;

....  
(6) any other reason justifying relief from the operation of the judgment.  
The motion shall be made within a reasonable time, and for reasons (1), (2) and (3) not more than one year after the date of notice of the judgment....

[13] The trial court's failure to include the exemplary award in its computation of attorney's fees under the Civil Rule 82(a) schedule was a legal error. *Sturm, Ruger & Co. v. Day*, 627 P.2d 204, 205 (Alaska 1981), *cert. denied*, 454 U.S. 894, 102 S.Ct. 391, 70 L.Ed.2d 209 (1981). Smalley's request to modify the judgment occurred more than thirty days after entry of judgment, so the trial judge had discretion to relax the time limit in the interests of justice. We conclude that the trial court did not abuse its discretion by amending the judgment to grant attorney's fees on the punitive damage award.

AFFIRMED.

720 P.2d 945

END OF DOCUMENT

**resolution.** 1. A formal expression of an opinion, intention, or decision by an official body or assembly (esp. a legislature).

**concurrent resolution.** A resolution passed by one house and agreed to by the other. • It expresses the legislature's opinion on a subject but does not have the force of law.

**joint resolution.** A legislative resolution passed by both houses. • It has the force of law and is subject to executive veto.

**simple resolution.** A resolution passed by one house only. • It expresses the opinion or affects the internal affairs of the passing house, but it does not have the force of law.

**Formal action by a corporate board of directors or other corporate body authorizing a particular act, transaction, or appointment.**

**shareholder resolution.** A resolution by shareholders, usu. to ratify the actions of the board of directors.

**A document containing such an expression of authorization.**

**Resolution Trust Corporation.** A federal agency established to act as a receiver for insolvent federal savings-and-loan associations and transfer or liquidate those associations' assets. • The agency was created when the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation was abolished in 1989. — Abbr. RTC. See FEDERAL SAVINGS AND LOAN INSURANCE CORPORATION.

**resolutive condition.** See *resolutive condition* or *CONDITION (2)*.

**resolutive (ri-zahl-ya-tor-ee), adj.** Operating or tending to annul, dissolve, or terminate <a resolutive clause>.

**resolutive condition.** See *CONDITION (2)*.

**resort.** Something that one turns to for aid or refuge <the court of last resort>. — resort,

**respa (res-pa).** abbr. REAL ESTATE SETTLEMENT PROCEDURES ACT.

**respite (res-pit); n.** 1. A period of temporary extension of time. 2. A temporary suspension of a death sentence; a reprieve. 3. A grant to a jury or court for further deliberation of a verdict or appeal. 4. *Civil law.* An agreement between a debtor and sever-

al creditors for an extension of time to repay the various debts. — *respite, vb.*

**forced respite.** A respite in which some of the creditors are compelled by a court to give the same extension of time that the other creditors have agreed to.

**voluntary respite.** A respite in which all the creditors agree to the debtor's proposal for an extension of time.

**respondeat ouster (ri-spon-dee-at ow-star).** [Latin "let him make further answer"] A judgment or order that a party who made a dilatory plea that has been denied must now plead on the merits.

"In case of felony, if the plea be held bad, the judgment is *respondeat ouster*; or rather, as the defendant generally pleads over to the felony, the jury are charged again, and that at the same time with the issue on the plea of *autrefois acquit*, to inquire of the second issue, and the trial proceeds as if no plea in bar had been pleaded." i Joseph Chitty, *A Practical Treatise on the Criminal Law* 461 (2d ed. 1826).

**respondeat superior (ri-spon-dee-at soo-peer-ee-ar or sa-peer-ee-or).** [Law Latin "let the superior make answer"] *Torts.* The doctrine holding an employer or principal liable for the employee's or agent's wrongful acts committed within the scope of the employment or agency. — Also termed *master-servant rule*. See SCOPE OF EMPLOYMENT.

"Most courts have made little or no effort to explain the result, and have taken refuge in rather empty phrases, such as 'he who does a thing through another does it himself,' or the endlessly repeated formula of 'respondeat superior,' which in itself means nothing more than 'look to the man higher up.'" W. Page Keeton et al., *The Law of Torts* § 69, at 500 (5th ed. 1984).

**respondent.** 1. The party against whom an appeal is taken; APPELLEE. 2. The party against whom a motion or petition is filed. Cf. PETITIONER. 3. At common law, the defendant in an equity proceeding. 4. *Civil law.* One who answers for another or acts as another's security.

**respondent bank.** See BANK.

**respondentia (ree-spon-den-shee-a or res-pon-).** [Law Latin fr. Latin *respondere* "to answer"] A loan secured by the cargo on one's ship rather than the ship itself. Cf. BOTTOMRY.

**respondentia bond.** See BOND (2).

**respondere non debet (ri-spon-da-ree non deb-et).** [Latin] *Common-law pleading.* The prayer of a plea in which the defendant insists that he

S

V

W

N

APP.

FROM :

FAX NO. : 4741745

May. 05 2003 12:24PM P1



facsimile transmittal

MAY - 5 2003

To: Senator Ralph Seekins 907-465-5241  
Attn: Brian Hove (Judicial Committee) Fax:

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From: Bob Hajdukovich Date: 5-5-03

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Re: HB 214 Pages: 3

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Address

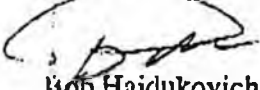
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Urgent  For Review  Please Comment  Please Reply  Please Recycle

Brian,

Here is the letter I would like Ralph to see. Dick Harding with Pemair and Karen Casanovas with the Air Carriers Association have sent official position papers on this bill. When I was over in London in April to meet with insurance underwriters, they were particularly interested in this bill, as they believe that it will make a substantive difference in their views on the legal disposition in Alaska.

Thanks for your review of this.

  
Bob Hajdukovich

Director of Operations, Frontier Flying Service, Inc.



# Frontier Flying Service, Inc.

May 5, 2003

Senator Ralph Seekins  
State Capitol, Room 125  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
907-465-2327  
fax: (907) 465-5241  
email: [Senator.Ralph.Seekins@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Senator.Ralph.Seekins@legis.state.ak.us)

Dear Senator Seekins,

I wanted to take the opportunity to encourage you to support the proposed HB 214 "An act relating to the recovery of punitive damages against an employer; and providing for an effective date.". The aviation industry in Alaska has long been plagued by outrageous liability claims in relation to aircraft accidents. As an aircraft owner, I am sure you have been aware of the increasing cost of insurance. This is unique to Alaska in that we have several issues that stack up against us. "We are all a bunch of bush pilots", "Alaska is the most dangerous place in the United States to fly" and to top it all off, "Alaska is second only to Texas as being the most Litigious state in the union"...This last one strikes me as odd because aviation is not a hobby in Alaska but a necessity and our legal system is doing everything to destroy it. The fundamental problem is that the premium base in Alaska is tiny relative to the claims paid out and Underwriters end up discriminating Alaska by putting it in its own book of business.

Unfortunately, the claims paid out are not to persons killed in aircraft but rather frivolous claims that originate with attorneys threatening a carriers' insurance company that they can get large jury awards, essentially no matter what the circumstances. To illustrate; we had an incident two years ago, where we had a nose gear collapse on a B1900 and did

.....  
5245 Airport Industrial Avenue • Fax 474-1745 • phone 474-1739x233

May 5, 2003  
Page 2

substantial damage to the aircraft, however there were no injuries to any of the 17 passengers... over \$300,000 was paid out to just six of them. The other eleven did not threaten to sue. Had the other eleven decided to pursue "entitlement" money by using the historically high jury awards against aviation, I am sure they could have gotten the insurance company to make an offer of settlement just to avoid the trial costs in a case that had absolutely no merit.

To make an excruciatingly long story short, this bill is a small but correct step in the right direction.

Your expeditious scheduling and support of this bill in your Judiciary committee would be greatly appreciated by the carriers in the State of Alaska.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 907-474-1739 x233 or my cell 907-322-2902.

Sincerely,



Bob Hajdukovich  
President

23-LS0833\Q  
Ford  
5/6/03

SENATE CS FOR CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 214( )  
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY

Offered:  
Referred:

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES SAMUELS, Holm, Rokeberg, Meyer, McGuire, Hawker, Dahlstrom,  
Heinze, Lynn

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to the recovery of punitive damages against an employer who is  
2 determined to be vicariously liable for the act or omission of an employee; and providing  
3 for an effective date."

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

5 \* Section 1. AS 09.17.020 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

6 (k) In a civil action in which an employer is determined to be vicariously  
7 liable for the act or omission of an employee, punitive damages may not be awarded  
8 against the employer under principles of vicarious liability unless (1) the employer or  
9 the employer's managerial agent (A) authorized the act or omission and the manner in  
10 which the act was performed or omission occurred; or (B) ratified or approved the act  
11 or omission after the act or omission occurred; or (2) the employee (A) was unfit to  
12 perform the act or avoid the omission and the employer or the employer's managerial  
13 agent acted recklessly in employing or retaining the employee; or (B) was employed in  
14 a managerial capacity and was acting within the scope of employment; in this

1 subsection, "managerial agent" means a management level employee with actual  
2 authority from the employer to create or modify the employer's policies.

3 \* Sec. 2. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
4 read:

5 APPLICABILITY. This Act applies to a cause of action that accrues on or after the  
6 effective date of this Act.

7 \* Sec. 3. This Act takes effect July 1, 2003.

**HB**

**224**

HB 224



FRANK H. MURKOWSKI  
GOVERNOR  
GOVERNOR@GOV.STATE.AK.US

P.O. Box 110001  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0001  
(907) 465-3500  
FAX (907) 465-3532  
WWW.GOV.STATE.AK.US

STATE OF ALASKA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
JUNEAU

March 27, 2003

The Honorable Pete Kott  
Speaker of the House  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 208  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Speaker Kott:

Under the authority of art. III, sec. 18, of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill relating to a tobacco product manufacturer's compliance with certain statutory requirements regarding cigarette sales.

The model for the bill was drafted by the National Association of Attorneys General in cooperation with a working group of participating states and is designed to aid state enforcement of the tobacco product Master Settlement Agreement and AS 45.53, and thus preserve, to the fullest extent possible, the revenue stream under the Master Settlement Agreement. We understand that most of the 46 participating states will seek to pass this legislation in their respective upcoming legislative sessions. We also understand that the bill has been reviewed and approved by two of the principal tobacco parties to the Master Settlement Agreement, Phillip Morris and RJ Reynolds.

In 1999, 46 states, including Alaska, collectively settled their claims against certain tobacco manufacturers and entered into the "Master Settlement Agreement" (MSA). Under the MSA, the participating tobacco product manufacturers agreed to pay certain amounts to the settling states in perpetuity in exchange for dismissal of the states' lawsuits. One of the provisions of the MSA, however, required that the states enact legislation that would "level the playing field" for non-participating tobacco manufacturers. This leveling legislation required such non-participating tobacco manufacturers to deposit money into escrow for every cigarette they sold in the state. The intent of this escrow requirement was to prevent the non-participants from undermining the overall goals of MSA by guaranteeing "a source of compensation and to prevent such manufacturers from deriving large, short-term profits and then becoming judgment-proof before liability may arise." See sec. 1, ch. 46, SLA 1999.

The Honorable Pete Kott  
March 27, 2003  
Page 2

Since 1999, the participating states have detected concerted efforts by non-participating tobacco manufacturers to evade the legislated escrow requirements. Various schemes have been employed, often through use of elusive foreign tobacco manufacturers, to attempt to circumvent the requirement of escrow deposits.

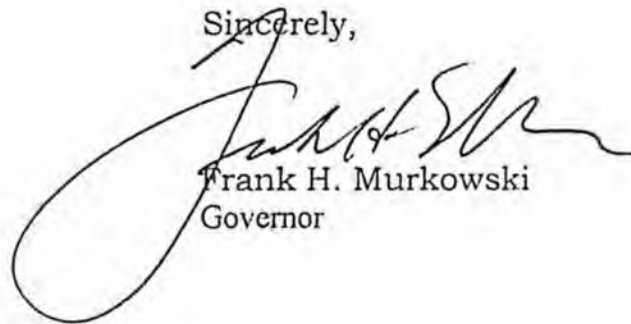
This bill seeks to bring an end to these schemes. In order to sell cigarettes in this state, a tobacco product manufacturer will have to annually certify that it is in compliance with AS 45.53. Additionally, tobacco product manufacturers must include certain information that will assist the Department of Revenue in its enforcement efforts in this regard.

The Department of Revenue will publish and update a directory of cigarettes that are approved for sale in this state. Cigarettes that are not listed in this directory are contraband and may not be sold in the state. The bill provides for civil penalties for selling or possessing contraband cigarettes.

The enactment of this bill will bring an end to efforts by non-participating manufacturers to evade their obligations to deposit escrow for their in-state cigarette sales.

I urge your prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,



Frank H. Murkowski  
Governor

HB 224

# FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
2003 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 1  
Bill Version: 4B 224  
(H) Publish Date: 3/28/03

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Affected: Law  
Title "An Act relating to a tobacco product manufacturer's compliance with certain statutory requirements . . ." BRU Civil  
Sponsor Rules Committee Component Commercial  
Requester Governor Component No. 2211

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

FUND SOURCE	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type-Do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2003) cost: 0.0  
Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2004 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

POSITIONS	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)  
This bill, based on a model developed by the National Association of Attorneys General in cooperation with a working group of participating states, is designed to aid state enforcement of the tobacco product Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) and AS 45.53, and thus preserve, to the fullest extent possible, the revenue stream under the MSA. One of the provisions of the MSA required states to enact legislation that would "level the playing field" for non-participating tobacco manufacturers, by requiring them to deposit money into escrow for every cigarette they sell in the state. Since 1999, participating states have detected concerted efforts to evade the legislative escrow requirement. This bill is intended to end those efforts.  
  
This bill will have no fiscal impact on the Department of Law.

Prepared by: Joan M. Kasson Phone (907) 465-5370  
Division Attorney General's Office Date/Time 1/28/03 11:30 AM  
Approved by: Kathryn Daughhettee for Gregg D. Renkes, Attorney General Date 1/28/2003  
Agency Department of Law

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2003 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: 2  
 Bill Version: HB 224  
 (H) Publish Date: 3/28/03

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Affected: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title Hearing Process: BRU Revenue Operations  
Master Settlement Agreement Component Tax Division  
 Sponsor Rules Committee  
 Requester Governor Component No. 2476

**Expenditures/Revenue:** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2003) cost: 0.0  
 Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2004 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This legislation would have no significant fiscal impact on the Department of Revenue. The intent is to aid the state in the enforcement of the nationwide tobacco products Master Settlement Agreement, therefore preserving, to the fullest extent possible, the revenue stream from that agreement.

The legislation would aid the state in its enforcement efforts against non-participating tobacco manufacturers that may try to circumvent the terms of the agreement.

Prepared by: Larry Persily, Deputy Commissioner Phone 465-5469  
 Division Department of Revenue Date/Time 1/29/03 11:23 AM  
 Approved by: Larry Persily, Deputy Commissioner Date 1/29/2003  
 Agency Department of Revenue

# FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA  
2003 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 3  
 Bill Version: HB 224  
 ( H ) Publish Date: 4/17/03  
 Dept. Affected: Health & Social Services

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction):

Title COMPLIANCE WITH TOBACCO MASTER SETTLEMENT

BRU State Health Services  
 Component Tobacco Prevention and Control

Sponsor HOUSE (RLS) BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

Requester HOUSE (L&C)

Component No. 2384

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>						
-----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES (0)</b>						
-------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other(Specify Type-do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2003) cost: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2004 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)  
 HB 224 requires tobacco manufacturers who are not participating in the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement to register with the Department of Revenue and report their sales to the State. These manufacturers are already responsible for contributing a set percentage of their tobacco sales to an escrow account established under AS 45.53. HB 224 will aid the State in the enforcement of AS 45.53. The department supports this bill.  
  
 The Department of Health & Social Services would not be directly involved in enforcement of this new law, and would not experience a fiscal impact as a result of passage of this legislation.

Prepared by: Doug Bruce, Director Phone 465-3090  
 Division Public Health Date/Time 04/16/2003  
 Approved by: Joel S. Gilbertson, Commissioner Date 04/16/2003  
 Agency Department of Health and Social Services

COMMITTEE COPY

**HB**

**227**

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Rep. Lesil McGuire, Chair  
Rep. Tom Anderson, Vice-Chair  
Rep. Dan Ogg  
Rep. Jim Holm  
Rep. Ralph Samuels  
Rep. Les Gara  
Rep. Max Gruenberg



State Capitol, Room 120  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
(907) 465-4990  
Fax (907) 465-6592

## House Judiciary Committee

### MEMORANDUM

To: Senator Ralph Seekins, Chair  
Senate Judiciary Committee

From: Representative Lesil McGuire, Chair *LM*  
House Judiciary Committee

Date: April 21, 2004

Re: Request for Hearing, CSHB 227(JUD): District Courts & Small Claims

---

I respectfully request that CSHB 227(JUD): District Courts & Small Claims, be scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee at your earliest convenience. I have included the following in the bill packet for your information:

1. Sponsor Statement
2. Sectional Analysis
3. CSHB 227 (JUD)
4. Fiscal Notes

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me personally, or my staff, Vanessa Tondini, at 4990. Thank you for your time and consideration.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Rep. Lesil McGuire, Chair  
Rep. Tom Anderson, Vice-Chair  
Rep. Dan Ogg  
Rep. Jim Holm  
Rep. Ralph Samuels  
Rep. Les Gara  
Rep. Max Gruenberg



State Capitol, Room 120  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
(907) 465-4990  
Fax (907) 465-6592

## House Judiciary Committee

### Sponsor Statement CSHB 227 (JUD)

**"An Act increasing the jurisdictional limit for small claims and for magistrates from \$7,500 to \$10,000; increasing the jurisdictional limit of district courts in certain civil cases from \$50,000 to \$100,000; expanding the jurisdiction of district courts; and amending Rule 11(a)(4), Alaska District Court Rules of Civil Procedure, relating to service of process for small claims."**

The jurisdictional limit for district courts was last raised in 1990 when the legislature raised the limit from \$35,000 to \$50,000. By raising the jurisdictional limit from \$50,000 to \$100,000, this bill will allow for increases in inflation and provide increased flexibility for litigants regarding whether to file in district court or superior court.

The jurisdictional limit on small claims court and magistrate court was last raised in 1997 when the legislature raised the limit from \$5000 to \$7500. Small claims court offers many advantages over district court to private litigants, including less formal discovery requirements, reduced filing fees, and relaxed evidentiary rules. This bill will increase the limit to \$10,000.

The bill also removes prohibitions against the district court hearing claims for false imprisonment, libel, slander, and malicious prosecution. These restrictions were adopted shortly after statehood. District court judges are well qualified and there is no reason to prohibit them from hearing these types of cases.

Finally, the bill will expand small claims jurisdiction over out-of-state defendants. Under current law, small claims actions against out-of-state defendants may only be brought under the landlord-tenant act or under AS 09.05.020, which authorizes service of process against owners or operators of motor vehicles involved in an accident in the state. The bill would authorize small claims jurisdiction over out-of-state defendants under traditional long-arm principles. This expanded long-arm jurisdiction is limited to district court judges. Magistrates will continue to be limited by the standards set forth in current law.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Rep. Lesil McGuire, Chair  
Rep. Tom Anderson, Vice-Chair  
Rep. Dan Ogg  
Rep. Jim Holm  
Rep. Ralph Samuels  
Rep. Les Gara  
Rep. Max Gruenberg



State Capitol, Room 120  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
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## House Judiciary Committee

### Sectional Analysis CSHB 227 (JUD)

**"An Act increasing the jurisdictional limit for small claims and for magistrates from \$7,500 to \$10,000; increasing the jurisdictional limit of district courts in certain civil cases from \$50,000 to \$100,000; expanding the jurisdiction of district courts; and amending Rule 11(a)(4), Alaska District Court Rules of Civil Procedure, relating to service of process for small claims."**

**Section 1** increases the jurisdictional limit of district courts from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

**Sections 2** increases the jurisdictional limits of the small claims court from \$7500 to \$10,000.

**Section 3** extends the jurisdiction of the district court to include claims for false imprisonment, libel, slander and malicious prosecution.

**Section 4** increases the jurisdictional amount for claims heard by magistrates from \$7500 to \$10,000.

**Section 5** precludes magistrates from hearing cases brought under the expanded small claims jurisdiction over out-of-state defendants provided for in Section 6 of the bill. Magistrates will continue to be able to hear claims against out-of-state defendants only under the landlord-tenant act or in accordance with the AS 09.05.20 relating to service of process on nonresident owner or operator of motor vehicle.

**Section 6** amends District Court Rule 11(a) to allow suits in small claims court against out-of-state defendants under traditional long-arm jurisdictional authority.

**Section 7** provides that sections 5 and 6 of the bill only take effect if the court rule change in section 6 of the bill receives the two-thirds majority vote of each house required by art. IV, sec. 15 of the Alaska Constitution.





HB

230

# Alaska State Legislature

Representative Jim Holm  
District 9

**Session**

Capitol Building, Room 110  
Juneau, AK 99801  
Phone: (907) 465-3466  
Fax: (907) 465-2937



**Interim**

119 N. Cushman St.  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
Phone: (907) 456-7423  
Fax: (907) 451-9293

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DATE: March 15, 2004  
TO: Senator Ralph Seekins, Chair  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
FROM: Representative Jim Holm  
RE: HB 230

Please schedule HB 230, Political Signs on Private Property, for hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee at your earliest convenience.

Back-up information is attached.

Thank you very much for your help with this bill.

# Alaska State Legislature

Representative Jim Holm

District 9

## Session

Capitol Building, Room 110

Juneau, AK 99801

Phone: (907) 465-3466

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## Interim

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## SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR HB230

"An Act relating to political signs on private property"

The ability of citizens to express political opinion, even to advocate for the same, is a fundamental right. This basic right becomes even more pronounced when the expression is made on one's own private property.

Currently, State law prohibits the posting of campaign or political signs within road view or 660 feet (whichever is greater). This applies to federally funded roads and state roads. The restriction includes private property. If you or I were to erect a "NO WAR IN IRAQ" or "SUPPORT THE TROOPS" sign today within the distance limits, we would be in violation of State law. The reasoning for this restriction has its genesis in the Federal Highway Beautification Act of '65. It has been interpreted to say that without a sign restriction, political or otherwise, Alaska *may* lose federal highway funds for being out of compliance. Correspondence with the Federal Highway Administration on this subject, shows this to be untrue (see attached letter from FHWA).

Similar restrictions, contained in city/county ordinance or state law, have been struck down in three out of four state supreme courts; Washington, Oregon, Colorado, and California. A U.S. District Court in Missouri found in '93 that very few restrictions could be placed on signage erected on private property. The U.S. Supreme court heard a case in '94 concerning private property and upheld the rights of the property owner. Further, there is a landslide of peripheral case law relating to this subject. If AS 19.25.105 stands as currently written, the state of Alaska is in danger of litigation and certain defeat.

We have a country which is based on the premise that all powers reside in the people and that the government derives its authority from the consent of the governed. Hence, we the people have the right to advocate or choose who governs us. This right should have little or no restriction.

This law needs to be amended, first to save the time and expense to the individual citizen who must challenge the current restriction of free speech, and second to save the state the cost of defense plus the likely legal fees awarded to a victorious citizen. I urge your support for this legislation.

# Alaska State Legislature

Representative Jim Holm

District 9

**Session**  
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## HB230

### Sectional Analysis

#### Section 1.

This section adds the findings of the legislature to give guidance in application and set forth the basis for amending statute.

#### Section 2.

This section adds paragraph 6 to AS.19.25.105(a) which sets the parameters for placing political signage on your private property. It is also the section under which DOT would set any regulation.

## Senate Amendments to HB 230 CS

### **Sec. 1**

Add intent language to say: **Signs should not pose any opportunity for indirect commercial advertising.**

### **Sec. 2**

Adds a new (c) to say: **That is outside of a department of transportation easement.**

These amendments were offered by the sponsor and accepted by the Senate State Affairs committee. A current draft of the SCS is pending.

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2003 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bill Version: HB230  
 ( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Affected: DOT&PF  
 Title Political Signs on Private Property BRU Design & Engineering Services  
 Component SW Design & Engineering Services  
 Sponsor Holm  
 Requester HTRA Component No. 2357

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
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<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b>						
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**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY2003) cost: 0.0

Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2004 budget proposal:

**POSITIONS**

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Dennis R. Poshard Phone 465-3900  
 Division: Special Assistant to Commissioner Date/Time 4/28/03 2:52 PM  
 Approved by: Commissioner Mike Barton Date 4/28/2003  
 Agency: Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

THE  
FOLLOWING  
DOCUMENT(S)  
ARE  
POOR  
ORIGINAL  
COPIES

**Sec. 19.25.075. Findings and intent of the people of the State of Alaska.**

(a) The people of the State of Alaska find that the presence of billboards visible from Alaska's highways endanger Alaska's uniqueness and its scenic beauty.

(b) It is the intent of the people of the State of Alaska that Alaska shall forever remain free of billboards. (§ 1 1998 Ballot Measure No. 5)

**Revisor's notes.** — In codifying this section, the revisor deleted “; and” at the end of subsection (a) and inserted a period.

**Effective dates.** — 1998 Ballot Measure No. 5, § 1, which enacted this section, took effect on March 4, 1999.

**Sec. 19.25.080. Purpose.** The purposes of AS 19.25.080 — 19.25.180 are

(1) to protect the public safety and the welfare of persons using the highways of the state by having outdoor advertising signs, displays, and devices along the highways controlled;

(2) to prevent unreasonable distraction of operators of motor vehicles; to prevent confusion with regard to traffic lights, signs, or signals or other interference with the effectiveness of traffic regulations, and to promote the safety, convenience, and enjoyment of travel on, and protection of the public investment in, highways in this state; to preserve and enhance the natural scenic beauty or aesthetic features of the highways and adjacent areas; and to attract tourists;

(3) to regulate outdoor advertising signs, displays, and devices in areas adjacent to the rights-of-way of the interstate, primary, and secondary systems within this state in accordance with this chapter and the regulations adopted under this chapter;

(4) to provide that outdoor advertising signs, displays, and devices that are not in conformity with the requirements of this chapter are a public nuisance;

(5) to provide a statutory basis for regulation of outdoor advertising signs, displays, and devices consistent with the public policy declared by the Congress relating to areas within and adjacent to the right-of-way of a highway of the interstate, primary, or secondary systems. (§ 1 ch 59 SLA 1949; am § 1 ch 86 SLA 1953; am § 2 ch 233 SLA 1968; am § 1 ch 155 SLA 1970; am § 1 ch 158 SLA 1988)

**Legislative history reports.** — For report on ch. 233, SLA 1968 (HSCSSB 144 am FCC), see 1968 House Journal, p. 815.

**Collateral references.** — 40 Am. Jur. 2d, Highways, Streets and Bridges, §§ 273-336.

40 C.J.S., Highways, §§ 217, 232.

Billboards and other outdoor advertising signs as civil nuisance. 38 ALR3d 647.

Validity and construction of provision prohibiting or

regulating advertising sign overhanging street or sidewalk. 80 ALR3d 687.

Validity and construction of state or local regulation prohibiting off-premises advertising structures. 81 ALRS 488.

Governmental liability for compensation or damages to advertiser arising from obstruction of public view of sign or billboard on account of growth of vegetation in public way. 21 ALR4th 1309.

**Sec. 19.25.090. Outdoor advertising prohibited.** Except as provided in AS 19.25.105, all outdoor advertising is prohibited. (§ 3 ch 59 SLA 1949; am § 1 ch 86 SLA 1953; am § 2 ch 155 SLA 1970)

**Sec. 19.25.100. Rural signs.** [Repealed, § 14 ch 155 SLA 1970.]

**Sec. 19.25.105. Limitations of outdoor advertising signs, displays, and devices.** (a) Outdoor advertising may not be erected or maintained within 660 feet of the nearest edge of the right-of-way and visible from the main-traveled way of the interstate, primary, or secondary highways in this state except the following:

(1) directional and other official signs and notices which include, but are not limited to, signs and notices pertaining to natural wonders, scenic and historic attractions, which are required or authorized by law, and which shall conform to federal standards for interstate and primary systems;

(2) signs, displays, and devices advertising the sale or lease of property upon which are located or advertising activities conducted on the property;

**Sec. 19.25.140. Compensation for removal of advertising.** (a) The department is authorized to acquire by purchase, gift, or condemnation, all advertising devices and any property rights pertaining to them, when the advertising devices are required to be removed under AS 19.25.150.

(b) Damages resulting from a taking in eminent domain shall be ascertained in the manner provided by law. (§ 5 ch 233 SLA 1968; am § 45 ch 69 SLA 1970)

**Sec. 19.25.150. Unlawful advertising.** An advertising sign, display, or device that violates the provisions of AS 19.25.080 — 19.25.180 is a public nuisance. The department shall give 30 days' notice, by certified mail, to the owner of the land on which the advertising sign, display, or device is located, ordering its removal if it is prohibited by AS 19.25.080 — 19.25.180 or ordering the owner to cause it to conform to regulations if it is authorized by AS 19.25.080 — 19.25.180. If the owner of the property fails to comply within 30 days as required in the notice, the department shall remove the outdoor advertising sign, display, or device at the expense of the owner of the land or the person who erected it. (§ 5 ch 233 SLA 1968; am § 19 ch 21 SLA 1991)

**Sec. 19.25.160. Definitions. In AS 19.25.080 — 19.25.180**

(1) "billboards" means any signboards, signs, displays, notices or forms of outdoor advertising that do not strictly comply with the provisions of AS 19.25.075 — 19.25.180, or with any permit or permits issued pursuant to AS 19.25.075 — 19.25.180;

(2) "interstate system" means that portion of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways located in this state, as officially designated, or as may hereafter be so designated, by the commissioner, and approved by the secretary of transportation (or by the secretary of commerce before the effective date of the transfer of functions under Public Law 89-670 (80 Stat. 931)), under the provisions of 23 U.S.C.;

(3) "outdoor advertising" includes any outdoor sign, display, or device used to advertise, attract attention or inform and which is visible to a person on the main-traveled way of a highway of the interstate, primary, or secondary systems in this state, whether by printing, writing, painting, picture, light, drawing, or whether by the use of figures or objects, or a combination of these, or any other thing designed, intended, or used to advertise, inform, or attract attention;

(4) "primary system" or "secondary system" means that portion of connected main highways, as officially designated, or as may hereafter be so designated, by the commissioner, and approved by the secretary of transportation (or by the secretary of commerce before the effective date of the transfer of functions under Public Law 89-670 (80 Stat. 931)), under the provisions of 23 U.S.C. (§ 5 ch 233 SLA 1968; am §§ 46, 47 ch 69 SLA 1970; am §§ 5, 6 ch 155 SLA 1970; am § 53 ch 30 SLA 1996; am § 3 1998 Ballot Measure No. 5)

**Revisor's notes.** — Reorganized in 1988 to alphabetize the defined terms.

effective May 16, 1996, repealed paragraph (1).

**Effect of amendments.** — The 1996 amendment,

The 1998 amendment, effective March 4, 1999, added paragraph (1).

**Sec. 19.25.170. Agreements with the United States; regulations.** The department is authorized to enter into agreements in conformity with the provisions of this title with the United States Secretary of Transportation as provided by 23 U.S.C., relating to the control of outdoor advertising signs, displays, and devices in areas adjacent to interstate and primary systems and to take action in the name of the state to comply with the terms of the agreements, and to adopt required regulations. (§ 5 ch 233 SLA 1968)

**Sec. 19.25.180. Applicability of municipal enactments.** Notwithstanding AS 19.25.080 — 19.25.180, a municipality may enact ordinances that regulate outdoor

(3) signs determined by the state, subject to concurrence of the United States Department of Transportation, to be landmark signs, including signs on farm structures or natural surfaces, of historic or artistic significance, the preservation of which would be consistent with the provisions of this chapter;

(4) directional signs and notices pertaining to schools;

(5) advertising on bus benches or bus shelters, and adjacent trash receptacles, if the state determines that the advertising conforms to local, state, and federal standards for interstate and primary highways.

(6) [Repealed, § 4 1998 Ballot Measure No. 5.]

(b) [Repealed, § 21 ch 94 SLA 1980.]

(c) Outdoor advertising may not be erected or maintained beyond 660 feet of the nearest edge of the right-of-way of the main traveled way of the interstate, primary, or secondary highways in this state with the purpose of their message being read from that travel way except those outdoor advertising signs, displays, or devices allowed under (a) of this section.

(d) Outdoor advertising may not be erected or maintained within the right-of-way of an interstate, primary, or secondary highway except that outdoor advertising is allowed on

(1) bus benches and bus shelters, and adjacent trash receptacles, located within the right-of-way under the authority of a permit issued under AS 19.25.200, if the bus benches or bus shelters are located within a borough or unified municipality and the buses that stop at that location operate during the entire year.

(2) [Repealed, § 4 1998 Ballot Measure No. 5.]

(e) [Repealed, § 4 1998 Ballot Measure No. 5.] (§ 3 ch 155 SLA 1970; am §§ 1, 2 ch 195 SLA 1975; am § 1 ch 30 SLA 1980; am § 21 ch 94 SLA 1980; am § 1 ch 6 SLA 1987; am § 2 ch 158 SLA 1988; am §§ 1, 2 ch 84 SLA 1995; am §§ 2 — 4 ch 10 SLA 1997; am § 4 1998 Ballot Measure No. 5)

**Cross references.** — For legislative findings and intent concerning the enactment of subsection (e), see § 1, ch. 10, SLA 1997 in the 1997 Temporary and Special Acts.

**Effect of amendments.** — The 1995 amendment, effective September 14, 1995, inserted “, and adjacent trash receptacles,” in paragraph (a)(5) and subsection (d) and, in paragraph (a)(6), substituted “highways” for “highway systems” at the end.

The 1997 amendment, effective July 20, 1997, in subsection (a), added paragraph (6) and made related stylistic changes; in subsection (d), added the para-

graph (1) designation, added paragraph (2), and made related stylistic changes; and added subsection (e).

The 1998 amendment, effective March 4, 1999, repealed paragraphs (a)(6) and (d)(2), and subsection (e).

**Collateral references.** — Classification and maintenance of advertising structure as nonconforming use. 80 ALR3d 690.

Validity and construction of state or local regulation prohibiting the erection or maintenance of advertising structures within a specified distance of street or highway. 81 ALR3d 564.

**Secs. 19.25.110 — 19.25.120. Removal of nonconforming advertising; neglect or refusal to obey removal order.** [Repealed, § 43 ch 85 SLA 1988.]

**Sec. 19.25.123.** [Renumbered as AS 19.05.123.]

**Sec. 19.25.130. Penalty for violation.** A person who violates AS 19.25.080 — 19.25.180, or a regulation adopted under AS 19.25.080 — 19.25.180, is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction is punishable by a fine of not less than \$50 nor more than \$5,000. (§ 7 ch 59 SLA 1949; added by § 1 ch 86 SLA 1953; am § 4 ch 233 SLA 1968; am § 5 ch 10 SLA 1997; am § 2 1998 Ballot Measure No. 5)

**Cross references.** — For another provision governing penalties applicable to this chapter, see AS 19.45.002.

**Effect of amendments.** — The 1997 amendment, effective July 20, 1997, substituted “AS 19.25.080 —

19.25.180” for “them,” and substituted “violation” for “misdemeanor.”

The 1998 amendment, effective March 4, 1999, substituted “misdemeanor” for “violation” and increased the maximum fine from \$1,000 to \$5,000.