# Casino bid loser seeks restitution by Edwards

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A casino company that lost out on two riverboat licenses wants a judge to award them at least $900,000 and possibly as much as $10 million in restitution from former Gov. Edwin Edwards and six other men convicted of corrupting the licensing process.

Astoria Entertainment claims in court filings that it lost the money when a group of conspirators, led by Edwards, rigged the licensing process and stole the rights to run the boats.

"The 1992 election of Edwin Edwards ushered in a repugnant era of systemic greed and arrogance fed by unbridled power seldom seen in civilized society," attorney Henry Klein of New Orleans wrote in the request on behalf of his brother, Bernie Klein, who headed Astoria in 1993.

Astoria wants U.S. District Judge John Parker to award them $350,000 paid by shopping mall magnate Eddie DeBartolo Jr. as the first payment on the total after a hearing scheduled for Sept. 1.

DeBartolo, the one-time owner of the NFL's San Francisco 49ers, pleaded guilty to misprision of a felony in October 1998. He later testified against Edwards and four other men during the trial that resulted in their convictions in May.

As part of his sentence, DeBartolo paid $350,000 into a victim's restitution fund kept by the government. DeBartolo also paid a $250,000 fine separate from the victim restitution.

Edwards, his son, Stephen, former gubernatorial aide Andrew Martin, Eunice cattleman Cecil Brown, Baton Rouge businessman Bobby Johnson were all convicted in the corruption trial. One-time Edwards associate Robert Guidry also pleaded guilty in the case and testified against Edwards.

A guilty plea is considered the same as a conviction.

Federal prosecutors are not opposing Astoria's claim, according to a motion

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# Edwards

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released Thursday.

Astoria's motion is dotted with highlights from the sometimes salacious testimony from the riverboat-corruption trial. The motion filed in DeBartolo's case along with similar motions in two other related cases asks Parker to tally the cost of doing business "the Louisiana way."

"It is high time that a message be sent out as to how courts handle corruption in Louisiana, not how public officials do business in Louisiana," Klein wrote.

Klein claims $908,062 of the money would cover the costs of preparing a proposal for a riverboat in Kenner. The $10 million is compensation for potential monies earned if Astoria had received the riverboat license, Klein wrote.

"This is just a free shot across the bow," former U.S. Attorney Harry Rosenberg said of the $10 million demand. "I'd be mildly stunned if the judge awarded $10 million in restitution."

DeBartolo claims Edwards extorted him for $400,000. Klein, in court records, describes DeBartolo as a willing — almost giddy — participant in the Louisiana Way."

Astoria filed and received preliminary approval to operate the Treasure Chest Casino in Kenner in 1993 and applied for the yet-to-be awarded 15th casino license, Klein wrote.

Guidry eventually won the rights to the boat in Kenner. Guidry admitted to a role in the scheme in October 1998 and paid a $250,000 fine.

Astoria claims that Guidry won the license through corruption and his connections with Edwards.

"Robert Guidry was openly telling anyone who would listen that he would get a boat because he was regularly losing at Edwin Edwards' poker games," Klein wrote.

Astoria also sued Edwards, DeBartolo, Guidry and others in state and federal court in October 1998.

U.S. District Judge Frank Polozola ordered those suits delayed until the criminal cases involving Edwards, Stephen Edwards, Martin,, Brown and Johnson are complete.

The Edwardses, Martin, Brown and Johnson are appealing their convictions.

Klein wrote that any restitution awarded would likely be deducted from damages awarded in the civil suits.

Either way, Klein wrote, Astoria deserves the money.

"The evidence that Astoria was victimized by systemic and pervasive corruption was no less than overwhelming," Klein wrote.

always closed beaches when appropriate and had few closings or advisories.

The "beach buddies" were East Haven Town Beach in Connecticut; North Beach and Oceanside at the Assateague Island National Seashore in Maryland; and Revere Beach and Short Beach in Massachusetts.

"The surprising thing was how few beaches met (beach buddy) criteria," said Mark Dorfman, a principal author of the study. "It really speaks to the need for more of a focus on really being stewards of our public beaches."

While last year's 6,160 advisories and closings are down from 1998, the report notes that 1998 was an El Niño

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