

60-3702. Same; trier of fact determines whether damages allowed; separate proceeding for determination of amount; considerations; limitations; maximum amount of award. (a) In any civil action in which exemplary or punitive damages are recoverable, the trier of fact shall determine, concurrent with all other issues presented, whether such damages shall be allowed. If such damages are allowed, a separate proceeding shall be conducted by the court to determine the amount of such damages to be awarded.

(b) At a proceeding to determine the amount of exemplary or punitive damages to be awarded under this section, the court may consider:

(1) The likelihood at the time of the alleged misconduct that serious harm would arise from the defendant's misconduct;

(2) the degree of the defendant's awareness of that likelihood;

(3) the profitability of the defendant's misconduct;

(4) the duration of the misconduct and any intentional concealment of it;

(5) the attitude and conduct of the defendant upon discovery of the misconduct;

(6) the financial condition of the defendant; and

(7) the total deterrent effect of other damages and punishment imposed upon the defendant as a result of the misconduct, including, but not limited to, compensatory, exemplary and punitive damage awards to persons in situations similar to those of the claimant and the severity of the criminal penalties to which the defendant has been or may be subjected.

At the conclusion of the proceeding, the court shall determine the amount of exemplary or punitive damages to be awarded and shall enter judgment for that amount.

(c) In any civil action where claims for exemplary or punitive damages are included, the plaintiff shall have the burden of proving, by clear and convincing evidence in the initial phase of the trial, that the defendant acted toward the plaintiff with willful conduct, wanton conduct, fraud or malice.

(d) In no case shall exemplary or punitive damages be assessed pursuant to this section against:

(1) A principal or employer for the acts of an agent or employee unless the questioned conduct was authorized or ratified by a person expressly empowered to do so on behalf of the principal or employer; or

(2) an association, partnership or corporation for the acts of a member, partner or shareholder unless such association, partnership or corporation authorized or ratified the questioned conduct.

(e) Except as provided by subsection (f), no award of exemplary or punitive damages pursuant to this section shall exceed the lesser of:

(1) The annual gross income earned by the defendant, as determined by the court based upon the defendant's highest gross annual income earned for any one of the five years immediately before the act for which such damages are awarded, unless the court determines such amount is clearly inadequate to penalize the defendant, then the court may award up to 50% of the net worth of the defendant, as determined by the court; or

(2) \$5 million.

(f) In lieu of the limitation provided by subsection (e), if the court finds that the profitability of the defendant's misconduct exceeds or is expected to exceed the limitation of subsection (e), the limitation on the amount of exemplary or punitive damages which the court may award shall be an amount equal to 1 1/2 times the amount of profit which the defendant gained or is expected to gain as a result of the defendant's misconduct.

(g) As used in this section the terms defined in K.S.A. 60-3401, and amendments thereto, shall have the meaning provided by that statute.

(h) The provisions of this section shall apply only to an action based upon a cause of action accruing on or after July 1, 1988.

History: L. 1988, ch. 209, § 3; L. 1992, ch. 307, § 3; July 1.