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## WLF Asks Eleventh Circuit to Reverse Punitive Damages Award Against Tesla (*Benavides. v. Tesla, Inc.*)

***“Punitive damages are meant to punish wrongdoing. The jury found the driver primarily responsible for the accident. A \$200 million punitive award against Tesla has no legal basis.”***

— Jay DeSanto, WLF Senior Litigation Counsel

WASHINGTON, DC—Washington Legal Foundation (WLF) today asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit to reverse a \$200 million punitive-damages award in a products-liability case against Tesla. WLF contends that the award violates Florida law and due process because Tesla did not engage in any kind of reprehensible conduct to warrant punishment.

The case arises from a collision involving a 2019 Tesla Model S equipped with “Autopilot,” a driver-assistance system featuring adaptive cruise control, collision warnings, and lane-centering assistance. Although the jury found the driver primarily responsible for the accident—assigning him 67% of the fault—it nonetheless imposed a \$200 million punitive-damages award against Tesla.

In its amicus brief urging reversal, WLF argues that punitive damages are unavailable as a matter of law because Tesla adhered to industry standards and worked to mitigate safety risks, while primary fault for the accident rested with the driver. WLF further argues that the punitive award exceeds both Florida’s statutory cap and constitutional due-process limits. It warns that expanding punitive liability under these circumstances will discourage the development of innovative vehicle-safety technologies that have the potential to make the roadways safer.

*Celebrating its 49th year, WLF is America’s premier public-interest law firm and policy center advocating for free-market principles, limited government, individual liberty, and the rule of law.*

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