

Simi Valley Acorn

\$200 million just isn't enough

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A bill was introduced last week that would increase the amount of money that could potentially be paid out to victims of the Sept. 12, 2008, Metrolink train crash.

Federal law currently dictates the amount be limited to \$200 million. By most people's standards, \$200 million is a lot of money. However, in this case, it just isn't enough.

Twenty-five riders were killed and more than 130 people were injured when engineer Robert Sanchez allegedly ran a red light and collided with a Union Pacific freight train. And according to U.S. Rep. Elton Gallegly, who met with many of the victims' families last month, the \$200 million cap wouldn't even cover medical costs for those who survived.

Gallegly (R-Thousand Oaks), along with 11 co-sponsors, most of whom are from California, want to up the possible payout amount to \$500 million in railroad accidents that occur as a result of gross negligence.

A federal investigation revealed that Sanchez was texting just seconds before the crash, setting up a time for a young rail enthusiast to try his hand behind the wheel. Grossly negligent seems too kind a word.

The knee-jerk reaction, especially in what many consider to be a sue-happy world, may be to consider \$500 million exorbitant.

But some victims in the Chatworth crash, the majority of whom were from Ventura County, will need medical attention for the rest of their lives. Twenty-five families have lost one of their own. Although no amount of money could ever replace a loved one, it's an insult to offer them so little.

The crash on Sept. 12, 2008, was the most devastating railroad accident in California history. It changed the lives of many Ventura County residents and continues to challenge those who were affected.

No compensation will change that. But, especially for the many who still suffer every day, financial help may be one important step toward helping make life a bit more bearable.

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