



Ankin Law Office LLC

Protecting the Rights of Injured Workers

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United States Supreme Court Allows Rear Seatbelt Lawsuit to Proceed



Last week, in [Williamson v. Mazda Motors of America](#), the United States Supreme Court reversed a California appeals court decision and allowed a California personal injury [motor vehicle lawsuit](#) to proceed. The lawsuit was grounded in allegations that the defendant failed to install lap and shoulder seatbelts in the rear seats of the vehicle in which the plaintiff was riding. It was alleged in the lawsuit the plaintiff was riding in the rear seat of a Mazda vehicle and that the lack of shoulder and lap seat belts caused the plaintiff's death following a car accident.

As explained in this New York Times article, the court disagreed with the defendant's assertion that a federal regulation preempted the lawsuit:

Mazda, which made the minivan, had argued that the lawsuit should be dismissed because the company had complied with federal safety regulations, which allowed it choose to install simple lap belts or lap-and-shoulder belts in some rear seats.

The company relied on a 2000 Supreme Court [decision](#) in a case involving a similar regulation that gave automakers the option of installing air bags. In that case, the court ruled that the regulation foreclosed the filing of injury suits under state law by people contending that manufacturers had made the wrong choice.

Therefore, the lawsuit can now proceed in California and the family will now be able to pursue a claim against Mazda for the very unfortunate and untimely loss of their loved one.

Howard Ankin of Ankin Law Office LLC (www.ankinlaw.com) handles [workers' compensation](#) and [personal injury cases](#). Mr. Ankin can be reached at (312) 346-8780 and howard@ankinlaw.com.

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