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Romanucci & Blandin secures settlement for party bus death

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Romanucci & Blandin, LLC, a national personal injury firm primarily based in Chicago announces settlement for death of 27-year-old James J. R. (Jimmy) Larsen following an incident on a party bus on a Chicago highway. On June 3, 2017, Jimmy Larsen and more than 20 friends rented a party bus to travel from Gurnee, Illinois to Rosemont, Illinois to celebrate a birthday. On the return trip, Jimmy was standing in the front of the bus adjusting the music for the bus sound system. Due to bus speed and inexperience of the driver, Jimmy fell and hit the passenger door. The door opened while in transit and Jimmy fell onto Interstate 294. Jimmy died as a result of the fall.

The Plaintiff was the Estate of James J. R. Larsen with his mother Kimberly D. Larsen as Estate Administrator. Defendants were VIP Charter, Inc., Select Limousine Service Inc., bus driver Basem Askar, Bode North America, Inc., and HCR, Inc., d/b/a Cumberland Servicecenter. The settlements were finalized in December 2021.

Defendant Select Limousine (Select) was the owner of the bus and primary operator. Plaintiff alleged that Select did not properly maintain and inspect the passenger door on the bus. The manufacturer of the passenger door, Bode North America, required monthly inspections of the locking/closure devices on the door. Defendant Select had no knowledge of the requirement and had never inspected or maintained the door. The locking devices were improperly aligned/engaged on the date of the incident, which allowed the door to open. Additionally, the bus driver, Defendant Basem Askar did not have a commercial driver's license and the lawsuit alleged he was unqualified to drive any passenger vehicle.

The Plaintiff was represented by Partner Joseph E. Kolar, Senior Council Robert S. Baizer, Senior Attorney David A. Neiman and Attorney Blake J. Kolesa of Romanucci & Blandin.

"This tragedy has changed our family forever, and no settlement will bring Jimmy back. He was an aspiring comedy writer and had his whole life ahead of him. He has missed being the best man at his brother's wedding and the birth of his first niece. We want to spread the word about the lack of safety regulations both federally and at the state level. No family should ever have to endure a senseless loss due to this kind of negligence," said Kimberly Larsen, Jimmy's mother.

"The tragedy here is that young adults were making the right choice by hiring a party bus company to transport them for a birthday celebration. The industry is not regulated, and many party bus companies are small shops with one or two vehicles that may be run from a home without mechanics or any formal business operations," said Joseph E. Kolar, Partner at

Romanucci & Blandin. “The bus company here was operated out of the owner’s Chicago condo and had no employees inspecting the bus.”

“The most significant issue in this case was the Defendant Select was cited for failing to have the minimum insurance required if the operator schedules interstate trips. Minimum insurance requirement for Illinois is \$5 million dollars and Select had a \$1.5 million dollar policy. There is no supervision by federal or state authorities to make sure passenger bus operators have the proper amount of insurance to do business. Select’s insurance was inadequate under federal and state law. The public needs to know that party bus operators are likely not carrying adequate insurance and may not be properly licensed,” said Robert S. Baizer, Senior Council at Romanucci & Blandin.

“Currently the State of Illinois requires inspections of party buses every 6 months. They are currently only visual and take a few minutes to complete. No one is testing passenger doors to make sure they will stay closed while in transit on the roadway. This is important because party buses do not have seat belts. Seating is u-shaped, encouraging passengers to stand, drink and move around the interior,” said David A. Neiman, Senior Attorney at Romanucci & Blandin.

To learn more about product liability cases involving motor vehicles please visit [here](#).