

Daily Journal

February 12, 2014

TOP VERDICTS OF 2013

TOP PLAINTIFFS' VERDICTS BY DOLLAR

\$34,921,215

Hackett v. Silva Trucking

Three years ago, a semi-truck jackknifed on state Route 12 in Sacramento County, colliding with the bus that Debra L. Hackett was driving and paralyzing her from the waist down.

The crash, which also caused skull fractures and injured Hackett's spinal cord, limited her ability to interact with her four children and husband. She had to spend more than half of each week in a convalescent facility.

Her experience was a sympathetic one for a jury, except for one big hurdle — Hackett wasn't depressed. Her family visited often, and she received satisfactory treatment from her doctors. She got to visit home three days a week and go to church on Sundays.

Robert A. Buccola, who represented Hackett against the trucking company and driver who crashed into her, said it was hard to prove Hackett needed to be home full-time with her family. *Hackett et al. v. Silva Trucking Inc. et al.*, 00128931 (Sacramento Co. Super. Ct., filed July 27, 2012).

"She's a positive person, and she was seeing her family with regularity," he said.

The witnesses are what tipped the scale, Buccola said. He invited Hackett's mother, her boss and people who knew her at church to show how involved she was in her community.



ROBERT A. BUCCOLA



STEVEN M. CAMPORA

"She configured her work around her children and always put a hot meal on the table," Buccola said.

The argument moved the jury — Hackett won \$31.9 million and another \$3 million went to her husband. The verdict is the largest personal injury award ever in Sacramento County, Buccola said.

South San Francisco-based Kevin K. Cholakian and Jeremy M. Jessup, who represented the defendants, could not be reached."

— Saul Sugarman

case
INFO

Personal injury

Sacramento County

Superior Court Judge Judy H. Hersher

Plaintiffs' attorneys: Dreyer Babich Buccola Wood Campora LLP, Robert A. Buccola, Steven M. Campora, Robert M. Nelsen, Ryan L. Dostart; Eliot M. Reiner

Defense attorneys: Cholakian & Associates, Kevin K. Cholakian, Jeremy M. Jessup