Train 188 crash victim's wife files lawsuit

Joe Brandt, *Daily News Staff Writer*
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BOB GILDERSLEEVE SR. sees a connection between politics and his son's May 12 death in the derailment of Amtrak Train 188.

After thinking about the crash in recent weeks, he's come to believe that more money should be spent on safety.

"I just wish Congress would re-look at this," he told the Daily News last night. "Money is leaking out of these [public] institutions."

The widow of his son Bob Gildersleeve Jr. filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the federally subsidized rail company yesterday.

Personal-injury attorney Tom Kline and his colleague Patrick Fitzgerald are representing Gildersleeve's wife, Danna. The couple have two teenage children and had been married 18 years, Kline said.

Gildersleeve Jr., an executive for the environmental safety and hygiene firm Ecolab, had boarded the train from Baltimore - his family lives in the city's suburbs - and was headed to New York for a corporate event.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, accuses Amtrak of negligence, citing reports that the derailed train approached the curve at Frankford Junction at 106 mph, more than twice the speed limit for that stretch of track.

"In its most simplified form, this involves grotesquely excessive speed that cost the lives and limbs of others," Kline told the People Paper yesterday. Damages demanded for Gildersleeve's family would pay for medical, funeral and burial expenses in addition to providing income to a family that's lost its breadwinner, the lawsuit says.

Eight passengers died and dozens of others were injured in the derailment.

An Amtrak spokesman declined to comment on the lawsuit.

District Court Judge Legrome Davis will hear the case.

Kline said that he and Fitzgerald also are filing a motion before the U.S. Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Legislation to consolidate personal-injury cases against Amtrak in one court. So far, cases have been filed in Philly and in New York, Kline said