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From: **Irena Ossola**

Date: Wed, Jan 15, 2025 at 11:05 AM

Subject: Innocent cyclists and pedestrians need protection

To: Steve Pilcher

Hello Mr Steve Pilcher,

I am reaching out as I feel you are the best person to contact as I step forward in my duty as a bike advocate and survivor of being hit by a car while riding my bike in 2017. I have made statements at the Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), and also with Bike Santa Fe, but have not received a response or feedback that steps will be made. So I reach out to you as you have the ability to make movement forward and I was recommended to reach out to you.

Penalties and repercussions for a car hitting a cyclist and pedestrian needs to increase.



I was a pro cyclist on track for the Olympics and racing at a world class level when I was hit while riding my bike in a bike lane, nearly killed (6 days of coma, 2 months in the hospital, over \$1 million in hospital bills), and this man drove his uninsured and unregistered car home with a \$150 fine. This man should have gone to jail for what he did! He gave an excuse that the sun was in his eyes, but that is no reason to be driving a deadly vehicle without the ability to see. If nearly killing me isn't a reason for penalty, then isn't driving without insurance or registration illegal? This should have been reason for jail time or penalty if nothing else for this man.



After this near-death incident, I coached cross country at St. Michael's High School, where I went to high school. A woman that was an ex high school competitor, friend and mother of 2 young boys that I coached. She was biking on the shoulder of the road in Santa Fe, with her husband when she was hit by a car. She died in her husband's arms, and this man received NO penalty for killing this mother of 2 young boys. He gave an excuse that allowed him to walk away, where there should be no excuse to all this kind of incident to go unpenalized.

If the penalty for hitting a pedestrian or cyclist is increased to forced jail time, even just for 1 day, drivers would raise consideration of innocent cyclists on the road and the repercussions for hitting them. The current penalties protect the drivers, whom have a steal cage around them for protection, cyclists are being killed by these drivers that receive no penalty for running us over.

I have experienced a further example of inexplicable excuses at my personal home on Galisteo street. A man, a lawyer, drove and crashed his car into my house and caused damage that took 6 months to repair (April- November 2024). This could have killed a person. And he received NO penalty.

He told the police and myself, that he had a seizure, but did not present any signs of medical issues/trauma. He did not take the provided ambulance to the hospital, but was walking around the scene with no implication of having just crashed his car so severely into my home. He also was not required to take a drug or alcohol test.



If a person claims to have a medical issue after crashing their car or causing damage to property or a person, they should be required to be reviewed at the hospital, and if they deny then they should be required to take a drug and alcohol test immediately, otherwise they will go to jail as they refuse to follow mandatory requirements after causing such damage or an incident.

In this letter, I have provided 2 personal examples of damage caused to myself and my home due to inexcusable and unpenalized excuses that people gave.

This needs to change, and I ask that you help me to make these first steps to make a change in our state. Please contact me if I can make further statements or assistance and HOW TO MAKE STEPS FORWARD FOR PROTECTION.

Thank you,

Irena Ossola

Galisteo, Santa Fe