

News For Thought



Drug Driving Limits Set For First Time

Limits on the consumption of illegal drugs before driving have been set for the first time under new legislation introduced in the United Kingdom, and drivers and motorcyclists face up to six months in prison for exceeding very low limits set on eight illegal drugs including cannabis and cocaine. The limits set for medicinal drugs exceed normal prescribed doses.

The legislation, which covers England and Wales, also sets limits for eight prescription drugs including morphine. Police will use new roadside drugs testing kits to measure cannabis and cocaine in saliva. Tests for other drugs including ecstasy, LSD, ketamine and heroin can be done at police stations.

A conviction will lead to a minimum one-year's driving ban and a fine of up to £5,000. Police will delay enforcing the new law until satisfied the procedures "withstand legal scrutiny."

Handlebar Height Law Repealed In South Dakota

Good news for those riding to the 75th Anniversary Sturgis Rally this year, as South Dakota has abolished their handlebar height law, so as of July 1st ape hangers will now be legal and no more 20-dollar-tickets for bars taller than shoulder-high.

On Tuesday, February 24, 2015 Governor Dennis Daugaard signed Senate Bill 85, joining 13 other states with no handlebar restrictions (Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, North Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee).

Pointing out that there are no national laws that regulate handlebar height, nor commonly agreed upon standards between states, ABATE of South Dakota emphasized personal comfort and style over safety concerns, given that no scientific studies identify any negative impact.


"A great team effort," cites ABATE state coordinator Jiggs Creasy. "Not a single opponent testified and not a single vote against it (SB 85 passed unanimously in the Senate 34-0 on 02/05/15 and passed the House of Representatives 69-0 on 02/17/15)."

Red Light Bills Advance In Georgia & Oregon

"Today marks the first time either Georgia General Assembly body has voted YES on Red light relief for Georgia Riders," said ABATE of Georgia state director Ned Williams, referring to Senate Bill 76 "Motorcycle Mobility Act" which passed the state Senate 51-4 on March 11. "So now we are ramping up for a fight in the house ..." and ABATE is calling for motorcyclists to contact members of the Georgia House of Representatives "and ask them to VOTE YES on AB76."

Likewise, a bill to allow motorcyclists to proceed through an inoperative or malfunctioning traffic-control signal has cleared the Oregon state Senate unanimously which will permit "a bicyclist or motorcyclist to proceed at a stop light under certain conditions."

Senate Bill 533 is now headed to the House floor with bipartisan support, and is designed to bring relief to bikers who find themselves at stop lights that won't change by allowing them to safely proceed through a red light that "fails" to trip after "one full cycle."



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Massachusetts Riders Oppose Proposed Ban On Bike Rides In Yarmouth

Massachusetts Motorcycle Association (MMA) members are organizing opposition to citizens' petition articles that will be before voters at the upcoming Yarmouth Annual Town Meeting. One article would ban motorcycle rides through town and the other involves a noise bylaw.

Rick Gleason, Massachusetts Motorcycle Association legislative director, said, if enacted, one of the articles would ban charity rides in town. That would include, he said, one of the town's biggest rides, Big Nick's Ride for the Fallen. "If this ban is put in place and enacted and if the attorney general stands by it and says that it is just, it's going to force the organizers to reroute the ride," Gleason said, adding that people who come to town for the charity rides spend money locally on hotel rooms and meals. "We do not support this ban. There are a couple of big rides that begin or end or pass through Yarmouth. We would hate to see the town miss out on the opportunities and the monies that are generated during these charity rides," he said.

Schools In Chad Closed Over Violent Helmet Law Protests

Schools and universities in the Chadian capital of N'Djamena were closed on Tuesday, March 10, 2015 and remained shut "until further notice" after student rallies against motorcycle helmet laws left at least one person dead.

The closure announced by the government of Chad in central Africa comes a day after students took to the streets to protest against a rise in helmet prices ever since their use became obligatory in N'Djamena effective March 1 and motorcyclists are now required by law to wear a helmet.

The protesters set fire to several vehicles and blocked access to schools and universities, an Agence France-Presse (AFP) journalist reported. Clashes broke out after security forces used tear gas to disperse the protesters. Hospital officials contacted by AFP said "three people were killed, and several others were injured."

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United Front Helps To Defeat Helmet Law Proposals In New Mexico

In a unique "Pay-to-Play" scheme to punish motorcyclists for exercising their right to ride without a helmet, a Senate bill proposed in New Mexico would have created a system of taxation for riders who opt not to wear a helmet.

Specifically, SB 308 would have created an annual motorcycle \$697 license plate sticker that allowed the operator and passenger to refrain from wearing a helmet, for a fee. It and a full blown helmet law (SB 327) were both heard in committee on the same day, and each bill died.

"February 24, 2015 is a day that will live in New Mexico Motorcycle History as two helmet bills died in the Senate Public Affairs Committee," said Annette Torrez, Chair of the New Mexico Motorcycle Rights Organization and a member of the NCOM Board of Directors. Torrez had issued a call to action, requesting assistance from the National Coalition of Motorcyclists (NCOM), the NCOM Legislative Task Force (NCOM-LTF), US Defenders, Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) and the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA), all of which came to the aid of NM riders to help defeat the onerous proposals.

"Together we can accomplish the possible and the impossible," said Torrez. "Now we can put our efforts into SB 651, the Careless Driving Bill to increase penalties for a person who commits careless driving that result in death or great bodily harm."

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