

News For Thought

France Paralyzed By Protesting Bikers

Despite pouring rain, nearly 100,000 angry motorcyclists brought every major city in France to a standstill in protest of unfair proposals including requiring every rider to wear a fluorescent yellow high visibility vest, banning traffic filtering (lane splitting), and increasing the size of motorcycle registration plates.

Organized by the Federation Francaise des Motards en Colere (FFMC – French Federation of Angry Bikers) through its highly efficient network of regional and local offices, Paris alone saw more than 15,000 bikers blocking the heart of the capital, with thousands more paralyzing dozens of cities across the country for hours with demonstrations against the French government and interior minister Claude Guéant for their anti-motorcycle policies and proposals.

"Bikers in France are just fed up with Guéant's stupid proposals and his 'I can't see you, I can't hear you' attitude, to the extent that almost 100,000 of them have today stood up against their government and paralyzed the whole nation," reported www.ukfrancebikers.com.

In response to the largest motorcycle protest in France's history, road safety director Michèle Merli said on national radio that bikers misunderstood the proposed obligation to wear a high visibility vest but would rather propose to riders that they wear a little yellow strap around their arm so that they can be better seen by motorists.

UK France bikers.com says they believe that "it is not the bikers who have misunderstood the latest government's proposals but rather the French government who continue to severely misunderstand and under-estimate the safety of riders."

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Congress Considers Alcohol Prohibition

Recognizing that higher levels of ethanol in gasoline can cause engine damage and void warranties for motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and many other small gas-powered motors, U.S. Representative Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) has introduced H.R. 748 to prohibit the EPA from authorizing the use of gasoline containing greater than 10% ethanol.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently approved E15, gasoline containing 15% alcohol, for use in 2001 or newer cars and light duty trucks, though most on- or off-highway motorcycles and all ATVs are not approved for its use, and using the hotter-burning fuel could void the manufacturer's warranty.

Motorcyclists should be concerned about the availability of compatible fuel supplies if gas stations primarily provide E15 gasoline for the majority of their customers, and riders are urged to contact their Congressional Representative to support H.R. 748.

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Harley-Davidson Automobile License Plate Debuts In Wisconsin

The first-ever Harley-Davidson license plate for automobiles is now available to Wisconsin drivers to help fund safety initiatives. The new license plate is the first and only Harley-Davidson branded plate available anywhere in the United States, and it is only being offered in Wisconsin -- the birthplace of Harley-Davidson.

Harley-Davidson Motor Company is partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to make the Harley-Davidson/Share the Road plates available for automobiles, light trucks and motor homes as of April 13, 2011. The cost of the plates will include a \$15 issuance fee, and an annual \$25 donation that will help support safety initiatives throughout the state.

The car-size license plate was designed in collaboration with the Harley-Davidson Motor Company Styling Team. The words "Share the Road" are displayed to emphasize the importance of motorcycle safety. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

States Green-Light Red-Light Laws

Motorcyclists in a growing number of states are being allowed to go through red lights

when sensors aren't able to detect they are there. Effective July 1, Virginia became the tenth state since 2002 to give motorcyclists license to proceed with caution after stopping when the device that causes the light to change from red to green doesn't activate, while a similar bill in Illinois sits on the governor's desk awaiting his signature.

HB 1981 by Virginia State Delegate Thomas A. Greason (R-Potomac Falls) allows riders of motorcycles, mopeds and bicycles to treat red lights as stop signs provided they come to a complete stop for two cycles of the light before proceeding with due care when safe to do so.

Illinois Governor Pat Quinn has until August 29 to sign or veto HB 2860 by Rep. Dan Beiser (D-Alton) which would permit motorcycle operators to proceed through a steady red signal that fails to change to green within a "reasonable period of time". In order to garner support for the measure, the city of Chicago was exempted from the proposed new law.

Kansas also recently passed a "dead red" law that allows motorcyclists to run inoperable red lights without risking a ticket, and similar legislation has passed in Minnesota (2002), Tennessee (2003), Arkansas (2005), Idaho (2006), Wisconsin (2006), North Carolina (2007), South Carolina (2008), and Missouri (2008). Texas and California have addressed the problem by passing laws to require stoplights to be fitted with sensors that can detect motorcycles. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Pennsylvania Okays Sunday Bike Sales

Governor Tom Corbett marked the midpoint of the 2011 legislative session in July by signing dozens of new laws, including legislation allowing Sunday sales for motorcycle dealers.

Effective in sixty days, licensed Pennsylvania motorcycle dealers will be allowed to sell, buy or trade bikes on Sunday. Current law allows the sale of motorcycle parts and other merchandise on Sunday, but not bikes. SB 419 is designed to give Pennsylvania dealers a level playing field with neighboring states that allow Sunday sales. Supporters have said sales have fallen in southeast Pennsylvania stores and have grown in New Jersey and Maryland since Sunday sales began recently in those states. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

North Carolina Prohibits Motorcycle-Only Checkpoints

"HB 381 an Act to Prevent Law Enforcement Agencies from establishing patterns for vehicle stops at checking stations based on a particular type of vehicle is now Session Law 2011-216," reports Doc Ski, legislative director for CBA/ABATE of North Carolina and a member of the National Coalition of Motorcyclists Legislative Task Force (NCOM-LTF).

The legislation passed unanimously through both houses of the legislature, and was signed into law on June 23 by Governor Beverly Perdue, making North Carolina the second state in a month behind New Hampshire to enact such laws in response to NHTSA funding of motorcycle-only checkpoints to stop motorcyclists en route to major biker events to check equipment and paperwork.

This bill, sponsored by Rep. John A. Torbett (R-Stanley), provides that a vehicle checkpoint pattern designated by a law enforcement agency shall not be based on a particular vehicle type and must include all types of vehicles, but does not restrict any other type of checkpoint or roadblock which is otherwise lawful.

In addition to preventing motorcycle-only roadblocks, Governor Perdue also signed HB 113 to increase the minimum penalties for violating the right of way of a motorcyclist. The previous fine for this infraction was a mere \$25, but this bill sponsored by Rep. Ric Killian (R-Raleigh) calls for a \$200 fine for a driver who causes a motorcyclist to leave his travel lane. The fine is increased to \$500 if there is property damage or personal injury sustained from this violation. www.ON-A-BIKE.com



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