

News For Thought



New York Riders Fight Discrimination

In addition to the unprecedented harassment on highways by police manning motorcycle-only checkpoints, which is the subject of ongoing litigation by Aid to Injured Motorcyclists (A.I.M.) Attorney Mitch Proner, Big Apple riders are now faced with elimination of legal bike-only parking spaces.

As if it weren't difficult enough for New York City motorcyclists, over the past decade bikers contend the city has turned up the heat on regulatory and legislative fronts, leading to growing complaints of harassment and accusations of discrimination.

There are only about 37,000 motorcyclists in a city of over 8 million people so they are a tiny minority, but the motorcycle community has begun to organize and fight back with a group known as "The New York Motorcycle & Scooter Task Force" (NYMSTF), working to ease some of these problems. Most large cities in the U.S. provide biker-only parking for good reason: Bikes and scooters take up less room and are more environmentally-friendly than passenger vehicles. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Dirty Politics Backfires

In an historic mid-term election that saw the GOP sweep into control of the House and narrowly miss winning a Senate majority, as well as Republican gains in gubernatorial posts and statewide races, most of the electorate is simply happy to see an end to negative campaign ads and mudslinging by candidates.

One such attack ad could easily be confused with a commercial for Sons of Anarchy, with a Florida congressional hopeful being accused of being a member of "a biker gang linked to meth running" and acts of criminal violence.

The TV spot kicks off with a rumbling Harley motor and a gritty-voiced narrator growling, "Guns. Prostitution. Murder. That's who Allen West rides with." Paid for and produced by the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the smear piece ends with, "We don't need a politician who rides with gangs." The Palm Beach Post reported that the Florida Democratic Party said a West supporter was wearing a South Florida Confederation of Clubs patch, and that confederation "has ties to the Outlaws organized crime syndicate."

West (R) is indeed an active motorcyclist who writes a regular political column for a local South Florida biker magazine "Wheels on the Road" that supported his bid, and the Tea Party favorite did have members of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club providing security during his campaign, but the mudslinging appears to be the desperate last-gasp tactics of incumbent Rep. Ron Klein (D) to hold on to his House seat.

The Miami New Times called it the "Scariest Ad Of the Year", but according to one of West's fellow biker rag columnists, Chuck Lehmann, "This smear tactic by Klein backfired big time as the voters overwhelmingly gave, the underdog, Allen West a resounding 10 point victory over the pathetic Ron Klein, who went down to defeat in disgrace. My WOTR colleague/columnist Lt.Col. Allen West can now be called Congressman-elect Allen West, C.D. 22 Representative in Congress." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Weird News: Actor Fatally Shot Filming Motorcycle Getaway Scene

Actor Kirk Abella was masked and filming a getaway scene for the British film "Going Somewhere" when a watchman mistook the performer for a real bandit and fatally shot him.

The New York Daily News reports that when the director shouted, "Action," Abella ran to his waiting motorcycle (and masked stunt driver) to make his film getaway -- only to be grabbed by his shirt and shot in the back at close range by volunteer village guard, Eddie Cuizon, in front of dozens of spectators. Police told the media that when the crowd heard Cuizon fire the gun they believed it was just part of the film -- not realizing they were witnessing the actor's murder. The shooting took place in the Parian district of Cebu in the Philippine Islands, where

criminals often use motorcycles to escape law enforcement. However, the shooting was no simple mistake. Firearms are illegal in the Philippines, and before the incident the guard borrowed a friend's .357 handgun and went to the police station -- where he was informed that the filming was taking place. The watchman, accompanied by a police officer, then made his way to the film set to help secure the area. Police Chief Alexis Relado said, "I don't know why he still accosted them." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

OSHA Tells Oregon School District to Ban Motorcycle Travel

Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division officials have recommended that school employees be prohibited from using motorcycles as transportation to work-related activities after Principal Tiffany O'Donnell was seriously injured Sept. 13 in a motorcycle accident en route between two rural schools. O'Donnell, principal of both Elk Trail Elementary School and Shady Cove School, was seriously injured while riding her Suzuki motorcycle between campuses when she was struck by a Nissan pickup truck that was making an illegal U-turn, police said.

State OSHA officials said the school district has not violated any regulations, and no citations have been issued, but cautioned that allowing employees to drive motorcycles for work activities presents a hazard to employees, as well as a liability to the school district. The school board is mulling over the recommendation, which is not mandatory.

School administrators are expected to drive their personal vehicle for work purposes, but it hadn't occurred to district officials to dictate what kind of vehicle they drive, said Eagle Point schools Superintendent Cynda Rickert, adding that "We don't know if the Board will move forward on a policy not allowing you to drive a motorcycle if you are doing school business." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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Motorcycle Fatalities Plummet in 2009

It's not surprising when accident rates increase in proportion to increased usage and number of miles traveled, but last year motorcyclist fatalities decreased more than any other category of road users despite more motorcycles being ridden more miles!

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Fatality Analysis Reporting System reports that 4,462 riders died in 2009, 850 fewer than in the previous year, representing a 16% drop in fatalities despite a 5% increase in miles traveled and 4.5% increase in the number of motorcycles on the road. The Motorcycle Industry Council recorded half a million more motorcycles in use in 2009, up from 11 million in 2008, and according to the MIC 2009 Motorcycle

Owner Survey, they were ridden 1.3 billion more miles. There was also a decrease in motorcycle accident injuries, down 6.3% from 96,000 in 2008 to 90,000 last year.

Overall U.S. traffic fatalities hit the lowest level ever recorded, since 1950 when the government began tracking such statistics, and the 33,808 road deaths in 2009 was down 9.7% from the year before. All traffic accidents, fatal or not, declined by 5.3% between 2008 and 2009, though motor vehicle crashes are still the leading cause of death for those between the ages of 3 and 34, NHTSA said. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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Quotable Quotes:

- "The world is run by those who show up."
- "If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your trouble, you wouldn't sit for a month."
- ~Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) 26th President of the United States