

# News For Thought

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## Pay-To Play Law Proposed In New Mexico

In a unique scheme to punish motorcyclists for exercising their right to ride without a helmet, a Discussion Draft of a Senate bill proposed for the 2015 52nd Legislature for the state of New Mexico would create a system of taxation for riders who opt not to wear a helmet.

Specifically, "The department [Motor Vehicles Division] shall make available distinctive motorcycle validation stickers that signify that any person age eighteen or older who operates a motorcycle on which that sticker is affixed are not required by law to wear a safety helmet. The department shall issue validation sticker when a qualifying person pays the fee as provided for."

A standard validation sticker is just \$15 annually, but it would cost \$692 per year for the "distinctive motorcycle validating sticker" that allows the rider to go lidless...the additional tax revenue to be distributed as follows: \$541.60 to the trauma system fund, \$135.40 to the brain injury services fund, and \$15 as additionally provided by law. Otherwise, the rider and passengers must wear a helmet, even though New Mexico law currently does not require helmet use for those 18 and older.

"My concern is this will turn into a helmet law in New Mexico," said Annette Torrez, chairperson for the New Mexico Motorcycle Rights Organization (NMMRO) and a member of the National Coalition of Motorcyclists (NCOM) board of directors, who reported on the effort at a recent NCOM Regional Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. "We found out that a lobbyist in New Mexico asked a senator to draft the bill, and though it does not have a sponsor yet, we are currently researching who is behind it."

## Texas Says No Polaris Slingshots

The Polaris Slingshot, a brand new three-wheeled sports-vehicle now just arriving at dealerships across the U.S., lacks componentry necessary to be considered "a car" and in most states you register it as a motorcycle; but the Texas DMV says "Whoa pardner, not so fast."

Though Polaris says they'd already received approval from the Lone Star State to sell their Slingshot there, according to a letter to Texas Polaris dealers posted on a Slingshot forum on November 4th they were notified by the Vehicle Titling and Registration Division of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles that the DMV is taking the position that even if dealers are licensed to sell it as a motorcycle, owners of the Slingshot will not be able to register it because it is not street legal as far as Texas "motorcycles" are concerned.

The conflict hinges on the wording used to define a motorcycle in Texas. The Texas Department of Public Safety Motorcycle Operator's Manual says three-wheelers are defined by certain characteristics, one of them being "saddle seating," meaning "seating in which the rider/passenger straddles the vehicle," but the Slingshot's seats sit side-by-side. Because it doesn't have a "saddle," the DMV ruling prohibits the Polaris Slingshot from being registered as a motorcycle, so they will not be sold in the state until this "VERY urgent matter" is resolved.

The Texas precedence has the potential to sway other states to define the Slingshot similarly, a scenario Polaris is surely hoping to avoid.

Polaris has fought hard for their not-car classification, and have used the fact that their vehicles are legally considered motorcycles to ease their passage through regulatory waters, but this gray area has led to some other unintended legal consequences, such as operator licensing, vehicle registration and applicable helmet requirements. Ultimately, it has everything to do with the way laws are written and

how "motorcycle" is defined therein, which varies from state to state.

## Tag You're It

In a survey of 2,000 licensed adult men and women across the country, Carinsurance.com found that half or more of America's drivers would support the use of special license plates to identify certain drivers on the road:

- 49.4% support license plates identifying drivers older than 70.
- 57.9% support license plates identifying novice drivers.
- 59.8% support license plates identifying those convicted of texting while driving.
- 69.1% support license plates identifying those convicted of a DUI.



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## Snitch Alert- Australian Biker Reward System Deemed Unsuccessful

In October 2013, Police Minister in the Australian state of Queensland, Jack Dempsey, announced Queensland's Crime Stoppers would be allocated \$5 million in reward funding for information about criminal gangs or bikers. But so far only

\$1,150 has been paid out.

Dr. Terry Goldsworthy, Bond University Criminologist, said the information being provided has not necessarily helped the crackdown on bikers. "[Crime Stoppers] have received about 1200 pieces of information," he said. "124 offenders have been arrested in relation to drug and property and weapon matters, but interestingly though, only 22 people can actually be able to have shown to have any links to any criminal organizations - it'd interesting to see how many of those 22 were actually bikers."

Between 2000 and 2010 the Queensland police -- a separate organization from Crime Stoppers -- paid out \$900,000 in rewards, and although figures weren't available for Crime Stoppers, Dr. Goldsworthy said they'd be quite different to QPS figures. He said the reward campaign has not had the outcome the Government anticipated... "This reward system has been highly advertised, and to only have one successful pay out, indicates to me that I don't think it's a success."

## Weird News: Hormel Motorcycle Runs On Bacon Grease

Hormel Foods Corp. headed out on the highway with a motorcycle designed to run on bacon grease. The Austin, MN-based company created a new marketing campaign in time for the International Bacon Film Festival in San Diego in late August, and rode the bacon bike from Minnesota to California.

America runs on bacon, and so does this bike -- getting about 100 mpg -- and the exhaust smells like bacon! Hormel and marketing firm BBDO Minneapolis sponsored the world's first motorcycle that runs on organic biodiesel made of refined bacon grease, and a team of 12 travelled with a rider during the trip to document the journey for a film, "Driven By Bacon," which was shown at the film festival this year.

Charlie Smithson of CSE Engineering and Taylor Bamber, Smithson's work partner, custom designed the motorcycle based on a rare 2011 Track T-800CDI diesel model. Grease is an abundant fuel source, as hotels and restaurants in the United States generate 3 billion gallons of waste cooking oil per year, which could fill tanker trucks parked bumper-to-bumper from San Francisco to Washington, D.C. and back.

Hormel representatives say the marketing push is an exciting opportunity to spread the word about Hormel's Black Label Bacon brand and the pig-powered hog will likely be used as a promotional tool in the future.

Once the film is complete, the motorcycle could be displayed at the Spam Museum.

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