

News For Thought

Bold Motorcyclists Riding Blind

"I live for this," shouted VIP Charlotte Gotz over the distinctive rumble of an idling motorcycle. "I love Harleys," she told Greater Milwaukee Today for their article "Visually Impaired Passengers Feel The Thrill Of Open Road" The wind on their faces and scenery roaring past, VIPs (Visually Impaired Persons) rode along with members of ABATE of Wisconsin and West Bend and Hartford Harley Owners Group chapters for a BOLD (Blinded Outdoor Leisure Development) outing. The Richfield Lions Club supplies the VIP riders, and ABATE with the help of local HOG chapters, bring the bikes.

"They're gutsy," said Andrew Olson of the BOLD passengers he's had over the past five or six years he has participated. "They're getting on with somebody they don't know, they don't know the road, what's around the next curve or where they're going," said Olson, a member of the West Bend HOG Chapter. "I would've thought it would be terrifying, but everyone I've ever taken with me knows how the bike handles, the countryside - their other senses are developed." When VIP and BOLD Director Marty Hutchings is asked why he enjoys the annual ride, he replied, "the feel of the wind in your hair, the open road, the freedom you have. It's something any biker would tell you." www.ON-A-BIKE.com

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the board of directors of (NCOM).

"This law is designed to increase penalties for careless, irresponsible drivers that hurt and kill those they share the road with," explained ABATE Lobbyist Holly Swinford.

Oklahoma's new law adds a one thousand dollar fine to fatality or injury wrecks where the conviction or guilty plea includes a traffic violation for Failure to Yield Right-Of-Way. The money raised will go into a Department of Public Safety fund to increase Motorcycling Safety Awareness, Reduction of Drunk/Impaired Driving, and Defensive Driving for young people.

"This legislation is a fitting tribute to the late and beloved David Jagers -- a very special member of our Community who gave so much while he was with us, and continues to be a force for good with this law being passed in his honor," said Revere. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Canadian Riders Protest Fee Hikes

Thousands of Quebec bikers braved the cold rain on May 21 to protest a planned hike in motorcycle licensing fees in the province. An estimated 20,000 motorcycle enthusiasts tied up traffic for hours in the downtown core, where the Committee for Action on Politics in Motorcycling (CAPM) of Quebec staged the "Day of the Wolf" bikers' rights rally.

Quebec motorcyclists are facing whopping increases in their drivers permits and the fees to license a bike with the Government-run bodily injury insurance program.

"It's not fair," one biker told Radio-Canada's all-news channel ahead of the rally. The provincial insurance agency is poised to raise the current \$253 registration fee to \$430 next year for most motorcycles or as high as \$957 for some sport models. Registration and licensing fees are going up marginally across the board, but bikers say quadrupling the fees for sport bikes is outrageous.

The provincial agency says expenses have outstripped revenues since 1982, and facing a \$500 million annual deficit they won't have the funds to pay for car accident injuries without the increases. CAPM has been fighting this battle with the insurance agency since 1999, however this is the first instance where a proposed regulation to increase the rates has actually been proposed.

Similar protests were planned for Quebec City, Val d'Or, Rimouski, Alma and Sept-Iles, Que. There are 141,000 motorcycles registered in Quebec, and motorcycling in the province is a billion dollar industry.

The CAPM has formed a coalition with the dealers and manufacturers associations as the announcement of the rate hikes has caused a 40% decrease in new vehicle sales in 2006. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Oklahoma Passes "Jagers" Row Law

"I'm very pleased to pass along the good news that SB1929, 'Jagers' Law' has been signed into law by Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry!" announced "Tiger Mike" Revere, State Coordinator for ABATE of Oklahoma and a member of

Michigan Legislature okays Helmet Law Repeal

"Michigan's helmet repeal bill (Senate Bill 297) landed on the Gov's desk this morning (June 16th) at 9:20 am," wrote Angel of the Confederation of Clubs of Michigan. "So if she does not veto it or sign it, she can let it lie on her desk for 14 days and it will automatically become law. Call Governor Jennifer Granholm at: 517-335-7858 or 517-373-3400 and request she sign Senate Bill 297."

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Under the bill, sponsored by Sen. Alan Cropsey, R-DeWitt, a rider at least 21 years old, who's completed a motorcycle safety course and has been operating a bike for at least two years wouldn't have to wear a helmet.

The Michigan House voted 66-37 on June 7th to repeal their 37-year old helmet law - the Senate first passed the

bill in March 2005 - and it now goes to the governor to sign or veto the bill. Granholm has opposed changing the law.

Similar legislation has cleared the House multiple times in the past, including 2004, only to die in the Senate. It has never reached a governor's desk. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

Illinois Bikers go to Court to Protect Safety Fund

Illinois motorcyclists, tipped off by state Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, have sought to block Governor Rod Blagojevich from using biker safety funds to bolster the state budget.

An aide to Topinka, Blagojevich's Republican challenger, acknowledged alerting ABATE of Illinois that the governor intended to transfer specially earmarked motorcycle safety money to the state's general bank account.

ABATE went to Sangamon County Circuit Court to prevent the Democratic governor from transferring money in the funds set aside for biker safety and training. Money in those funds comes from motorcycle registration fees and other surcharges paid by bikers. The group argued the governor lacks the constitutional authority to transfer the funds.

Aides to the governor said state lawmakers approved the fund transfers, which gave Blagojevich the authority to move the money. A lawyer for the state told the court the money is needed to pay bills, and that the money transfers, totaling about \$90 million from a number of specially earmarked funds, are part of the overall budget plan.

A spokeswoman from the governor's office criticized the state Treasurer's long-standing opposition to fund transfers; "If Treasurer Topinka had her way, special interest funds would continue to sit unused year after year, serving no purpose whatsoever."

Recently in Ohio, the Office of Budget and Management proposed transferring \$750,000 from the state's Motorcycle Safety and Education Fund for other purposes, but motorcyclists' rights organizations throughout Ohio successfully persuaded the Ohio Controlling Board to deny the raid on this rider-supported fund. www.ON-A-BIKE.com

"Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it."

Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States (1911-2004)



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