

News For Thought

NCOM NEWS BYTES
Compiled & Edited by Bill Bish,
National Coalition of Motorcyclists



New York Seeks Modifications to Handlebar height law

Custom motorcycle maven Paul Teutul Sr. has a reason to smile under his Fu Manchu mustache. The New York state legislature is considering a bill to allow motorcycle handlebars to be as high as a rider's shoulders. Now, they can only be 15 inches above the seat.

Teutul, owner of Orange County Choppers and star of the Discovery Channel's hit show "American Chopper," told the New York Daily Star that the bill is "great," even though the bill doesn't go as far as he'd like. He prefers a ride with handlebars over his head.

"I like ape hangers," Teutul said, referring to the high handlebars. "It's actually a really comfortable ride and it really doesn't change the handling."

ABATE of New York activist Larry Schwartz said the 15-inch restriction was put in place in the 1960s to give police a reason to pull over "outlaw bikers" on choppers. "It was just an easy way to stop anybody they wanted, but it has nothing to do with ergonomics or the comfort or safety of motorcycles."

Assemblyman Ron Canestrari, an Albany County Democrat and Assembly sponsor of the bill, said a shoulder-high limit makes more sense. "It is more popular with the motorcyclists, more consistent with the newer motorcycles, some of which are custom-designed, and there are no safety hazards posed by it, which is the most important thing," Canestrari said. The bill also has majority support in the Senate.

Teutul said he was once ticketed in New Hampshire for his high handlebars, but police in New York have never bothered him. "They're pretty cool about it," he said.

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Weird news Explosive Situation

Heidi Brown was told she could park her new scooter outside the vehicle registration office in London while she waited to get number plates. But to her horror, it was blown up by the army after someone reported that it might be a bomb. Police in Ipswich confirmed that a moped had been blown up in a controlled explosion after local business people "raised concerns" that it could be a bomb.

"The moped was chained to the perimeter fence outside the building. We weren't able to identify whose vehicle it was because there were no number plates on it," said a spokeswoman for Suffolk police. She said the surrounding office buildings were evacuated and three roads were closed off.

The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported the scooter belonged to Brown, a 22-year-old care worker, who said she had been told she could leave it there awaiting inspection. aimncom.com

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National Helmet Law Avoided

Due to quick actions by national and state motorcycle rights organizations and concerned individual riders, an attempt to amend a helmet law requirement into the federal highway bill has been averted. Just days before Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) intended to introduce yet another national helmet law mandate as an amendment to the Senate's version of the transportation reauthorization measure SAFE-TEA (HR 3), word was spread over the Internet and through discussion groups which mobilized bikers nationwide to flood their Senators' offices with e-mails and phone calls urging them to oppose the amendment. On Wednesday, May 11, the Lautenberg Amendment to reinstate the federal helmet law that he masterminded back in 1991, which was eventually repealed after heavy lobbying by bikers in 1995, was decisively defeated by a vote of 69-28. The amendment would have diverted a portion of any state's federal highway funding into safety programs if that state did not have and enforce a mandatory helmet law for all motorcycle riders. The House of Representatives passed their version of the highway funding bill, H.R.3, the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (TEA-LU) by a vote of 417-9 on March 10, including motorcycle safety agenda language and training grant funding, and is now awaiting the Senate to do likewise so that both bills can go to conference committee to iron out any discrepancies and then on to President Bush for his signature or veto. Congress is currently on their 6th deadline extension to enact a highway bill, and the deadline for completion is May 31st. Aimncom.com

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Arkansas passes Row legislation, red light law

Arkansas 85th General Assembly successfully passed two key pieces of pro-motorcycle legislation this session.

SB993 introduced by Jim Holt (R - Springdale) entitled "An Act to Levy Additional Penalties for Violations of the Rules of the Road that Involve the Failure to Yield to the Right-of-Way" that adds additional fines and penalties against a person who is guilty of a right-of-way violation causing an accident that results in injury or death.

They also had signed into law legislation authorizing motorcycles to proceed through controlled red lights if they can't trip the pressure plates, similar to legislation recently passed in Tennessee.

HB2833 introduced by Representative Mark Pate (D) (Bald Knob), will "...Allow the drivers of Motorcycles to Proceed Through an Intersection Controlled by a Traffic-Control Device Under Limited Circumstances". If a driver of a motorcycle approaches an intersection that is controlled by a traffic-control device, the driver may proceed through the intersection on a red light if the vehicle sensor fails to detect the motorcycle.

"Not since March 12, 1997 when Arkansas bikers amended the helmet law has pro-biker legislation been introduced," says Ginger Lewis of ABATE of Arkansas and Ride Free Arkansas PAC. "Many thanks to the Ride Free Arkansas PAC for actively soliciting legislators to present the legislation as well as the support of the members of Arkansas Bikers Aiming Towards Education (ABATE) who took action when time came to call on their senators and representatives for support and passage."aimncom.com

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