

News For Thought

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“Florida State Fair Settles Civil Rights Lawsuit.”

In a big win for motorcycle club members nationwide, the Florida State Fair and local law enforcement were dealt a stunning blow when they agreed to settle a Civil Rights lawsuit filed by Aid to Injured Motorcyclists (A.I.M.) attorney Jerry Theophilopoulos ("Jerry T") on behalf of the "West Florida Confederation of Clubs".

The Florida State Fair and Fair employees, along with two Hillsborough County Sheriffs agreed to pay three members of the "West Florida Confederation of Clubs" a total of \$72,500 to settle the case after nearly a hundred club members were denied entry into the fair by off-duty sheriff's deputies on Feb. 7, 2010 based on the fact they would not remove their colors.

A posted policy banned "club colors" and the bikers were threatened with jail if they attempted to enter the front gate of the fair, and AIM lawyer Jerry T. captured the entire event on film with a videographer, which was a pivotal reason the federal lawsuit was settled out of court.

"This settlement is a great day for all motorcycle club members, not only in the state of Florida, but across America," said Jerry T., "We sent a message that our people will not be discriminated against in a public forum."

After the lawsuit, the no-club-colors signs were replaced by a posted policy stating that the fair may turn away or eject people who are disruptive or who display behavior associated with "criminal gang membership." That cleared the way for bikers to attend subsequent fairs.

More Motorcycles Equals Safer Roads

According to the Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA), an increased number of motorcycles on the road results in a lower rate of serious accidents. When 10% or more of vehicles on the road are motorcycles, mopeds or scooters, there is a proportionate reduction in rider fatalities, says Steve Kenward, CEO of the MCIA, a motorcycle trade association in England.

Japan has 98 bikes per 1,000 vehicles (9.8%), and for every 1,000 bikes on the road, the country has 0.8 motorcyclist fatalities per year. In Europe the ratio of bikes to cars is lower, at 73 per 1,000 (7.3%), and the rate of motorcyclist fatalities is higher, at 1.52 per 1,000 bikes. In the USA, the ratio of bikes to cars is just 27 per thousand (2.7%) and the motorcyclist fatality rate is much higher, at 5.32 per thousand bikes.

Kenward told how "volume breeds safety" at the recent National Safer Roads Partnerships' Conference, where police forces, local authorities, government officials and academics meet to discuss road safety.

There is also a growing body of evidence that those who start their motoring career on motorcycles make better car drivers.

With congestion on the rise, Kenward explained that getting more motorists on motorcycles would result in a "virtuous circle" leading to better road users.

According to their research, an increase in motorcycle use has also been proven to keep traffic flowing. A study which models traffic for one of the busiest roads in Europe concluded that if just 10% of drivers swapped to powered two wheelers (PTWs), congestion would be reduced for all road users by 40%. Increase that number to 25% and congestion is eliminated entirely.

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Sikhs Denied Exemption From Ontario Helmet Law

Motorcycle-riding Sikhs in Ontario, Canada will not be exempted from the helmet law, Premier Kathleen Wynne has ruled. The Canadian Sikh Association received a letter from Wynne stating the Liberal government, for safety reasons, will not allow Sikh motorcycle riders to wear only

turbans as two other Canadian Provinces currently allow.

The Ontario Highway Traffic Act requires all motorcyclists to wear a helmet.

This poses a problem for those of the Sikh faith, whose turbans don't fit under most helmets.

"After careful deliberation, we have determined that we will not grant this type of exemption as it would pose a road safety risk," Wynne said in her letter dated Aug. 14.

Wynne said safety trumps religious freedoms in this case. "As you know, the issue of balance between religious accommodation and public safety has been considered by the courts in Ontario which, on this issue, have found that Ontario's mandatory helmet law does not infringe on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, nor the Ontario Human Rights Code," she said.

In 2008, an Ontario judge ruled against a human rights challenge launched by a devout Sikh who was fined \$110 in 2005 for not wearing a helmet while riding a motorcycle.

NDP MPP Jagmeet Singh (Bramalea-Gore-Malton) said he was "deeply disappointed by Premier Wynne's decision not to grant an exemption to motorcycle helmet laws for turbaned Sikhs. Similar exemptions already exist in the United Kingdom, Manitoba and British Columbia, and here in Ontario the idea is supported by members from all three caucuses."

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NSW Australia Legalizes Lane Filtering

This summer the state government of New South Wales legalized lane filtering, which allows motorcyclists to legally ride between two lanes when traffic is stationary or slow moving. The idea behind legalizing lane filtering was to reduce traffic congestion and queuing at intersections.

There are strict conditions attached, which include heavy fines and three demerit points for motorcyclists caught moving between traffic at more than 30 kilometers/hour, under a new offense called lane splitting. It is also illegal for motorcyclists to lane filter next to a curb, next to parked cars or in school zones.

Police say that early indicators show the new legislation is working, but many motorists are still unaware of the new rules. Other road users (motorists, cyclists and pedestrians) are advised by the Roads and Maritime to "check twice" for motorcyclists and follow regular road rules.

Biker Profiling

New demographics prepared by the Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC) show the median age of California motorcycle owners was 45 years old in 2012 -- having risen from 33 years in 1990, 38 years in 1998 and 41 years in 2009.

Statistics show that the median income for motorcyclists in the Golden State was \$64,130 in 2012, more than double what it was in 1990. More than 60% reported their annual household incomes at over \$50,000, with almost 20% reporting incomes of over \$100,000. Almost three quarters of them were employed. About 14% were retired.

Weird News: Motorcycle-Riding Vigilante Serves Dirty Justice

Beware litterbugs; a vigilante female biker, fed up with people brazenly tossing trash out of their vehicles, is seeking street justice.

Wearing a GoPro camera on her helmet, she rides her motorcycle up to drivers who just can't be bothered to find a trash can and knocks on the window. What happens next in a video gone viral is a beautiful victory for everyone who has ever felt that little twinge of anger while watching someone lazily toss a full bag of fast food trash onto the pavement... she chucks garbage right back at the offenders before speeding away on her motorcycle!

Shot somewhere in Russia, immediately after the video was uploaded it skyrocketed to the top of Reddit.com with more than half-a-million views in 24 hours; a sweet vision of revenge for all those people who can't stand littering.

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