

# Legislative Update for Chatham County CBA – July 2008

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## State Issues:

- **Lerner's Permit Bill (SB 375):** (A bill that will shorten the time a person has to learn to ride) We oppose this bill. The bill passed the Senate in 2007. It was sitting in the House Transportation Committee since May 15, 2007 but was voted on Monday of this week (6/30/08). The bill did not receive a favorable vote (11-8) and the bill is probably dead for this session.

- **NO CHANGE - UNC Motorcycle Safety Center Bill (SB 1121)** – We support the "Motorcycle Safety Center" proposed by Senate bill 1121 which would support the development and evaluation of a "crash-prevention" approach to motorcycle safety by UNC researchers. This was May's Action Alert. Senator Stevens says it will be reintroduced next session.

- **NO CHANGE - Street Gang Prevention Act (H274/SB1358)** - We have no problem with the Senate Version (SB 1358) of this bill... The House bill is the one which criminalizes people for exercising their right to freely associate with others. When the House bill got to the Senate, it was amended and sent back to the House for concurrence. The House voted to "not concur" with the Senate's amendments to HB 274. The bill now sits in a conference committee comprised of Senators and Representatives to work out the items in dispute. Although the bill has gone to committee, there will be no committee meetings, nor public testimony. We have voiced our concerns. We spoke extensively last session and included it as an issue for discussion and on our courtesy cards for this past Lobby Day. All we can do now is await and see if they can work out an agreement behind closed doors.

## Federal Issues:

- **NO CHANGE - HIPAA Loophole** – This bill makes it illegal for medical insurance companies to discriminate against motorcyclists when they get hurt on their bikes. We have already contacted our legislators on this issue. We will continue to monitor this issue. This bill currently has 104 co-sponsors.

## News Items:

- **Tiered Licensing hits Utah** - The state administrator of motorcycle safety in Utah has issued a mandate reorganizing the way motorcycle licenses are handed out. The way it works is that if you test on a 90cc you can ride 90cc or less; if you test on 249cc you can ride a 249cc or less; if you test on 649cc you can ride 649cc or less; and finally if you test on a 650cc you can ride whatever you want. One need not progress up the tiers to attain the unlimited license, but this process does raise a few questions. Will there be an unintended negative effect of discouraging folks from getting M class endorsements at all? Will it force people to take a bike larger than what they are comfortable on to the test in order to ride that new Sportster? Will it turn off people to training curriculum that uses 125cc or 250cc motorcycles? The implementation date is July 8, and the MRF is working with motorcyclists in Utah. Vin Note: The US has been under pressure to implement graduated licensing because it is used in Canada and much of Europe. A motorcycle rider receives a novice license, similar to a learner's permit. The permit limits the novice to a small motorcycle and forbids night riding. After riding a certain number of miles, the novice can "graduate" to a more powerful bike. Unless US bikers speak up, we will have graduated licensing here in the US.

- **Mandatory Training hits Florida** - A new Florida law is making it more difficult for new motorcyclist to get their bikes on the road. Bikers will now have to pass a safety course before they can get a license. Until now, anyone over the age of 21 who wanted a motorcycle endorsement on their driver's license had to pass both a motorcycle driving and written test, but starting July 1 a new law will require all new riders to take a more comprehensive basic riders course.

- **Myrtle Beach Considers Helmet Law to Deter Rally-Goers** - Members of the MB City Council are looking for options to put a stop to local motorcycle rallies and deter bikers from attending. One option under consideration is the passage of a local ordinance to require motorcyclists to wear helmets within the city limits. During the public discussion period at a packed City Council meeting recently, resident Ronnie Felts said he has spoken with members of the South Carolina Legislature who urged the city to push the state for a local option on the state's helmet law, which now says no motorcyclist 21 or older is obligated to wear headgear. The city cannot now pass any law more restrictive than the state's, though according to The (Myrtle Beach) Sun News which reported on the meeting, Mayor Pro-Tem Wayne Gray said there are efforts underway to allow municipalities to do just that. **No one in the city council audience spoke in favor of the rallies**, and each of the council members agreed they want to put an end them - neither of which is sponsored by the city. **"We're going to do what we can to shut the sucker down," said councilman Chestnut, who also received a standing ovation.** They also recently raise property taxes to fund a program to get rid of the bikers and attract more family friendly tourists.

- **Interesting Survey Results** – According to the online survey of licensed Connecticut drivers, conducted by Allstate Insurance, 25% of car drivers felt that motorcycles should be banned from highways and 50% of them felt that motorcycles should be banned during inclement weather. Vin note: That should be a wake-up call for all of us. If non-riding NC legislators are anything like these car drivers, then 25% of our legislators want to ban motorcycles. I don't think this is a far stretch from the truth. 25% of 170 in NC = 42

**Awareness is our best defense. Please stay involved legislatively.**

**Please read DocSki's latest blog entry at least once a week:**

**<http://docskivnv.bravejournal.com/>**

You can also subscribe to the email alerts and receive an email every time Doc posts a message.

*CC-CBA Members: Please give this article to one of your biker friends.*

## **"Hey Man, ..... I just wanna Ride."**

This article appeared in the June 2004 issue of US Rider Magazine.

That's the excuse we hear from many riders who don't want to get involved in bikers' rights. Another statement we hear is ... "I am not political and don't care about politics."

Being a biker and not wanting to support bikers' rights is like being a parent and not wanting to get involved in what your kids are doing. If we care about something, then we should get involved and learn about what we need to do to make it better. We nurture our children because we love them and want them to be safe and grow. If we love riding our motorcycle, then we should care about bikers' rights and nurture our riding lifestyle. We should get involved in making sure that the future of motorcycling is brighter, more secure, and ultimately safer. By being a rider and not caring about bikers' rights, you are making a statement. The statement you are making is that you are choosing ignorance. You are choosing to ignore the issues that affect your favorite endeavor. Next to spending time with my family, motorcycling is my favorite endeavor. I love it and I know if I ever have to give it up, I will be very sad. I know other riders love riding as much as I do. Yet they ignore bikers' rights issues. I cannot understand why they ignore something that they love so much?

I live in a state that has a mandatory helmet law. In my state, many riders say "I don't care about repealing the mandatory helmet law, so I don't care about bikers' rights." Bikers' rights are not only about repealing mandatory helmet laws. Today in North Carolina, there are three bills that have been introduced by biker constituents. The helmet law is a small part of bikers' rights. Riders who scratch the surface will see that. They will see that there are many other issues that affect bikers. They will see that we are all at risk. Ignorance towards public affairs and legislation breeds a uniformed, ignorant riding community. I do not want to be ignorant concerning the issues that affect my favorite endeavor.

If you are not sure where to start, contact your local motorcyclists' rights organization (MRO). MRO members are happy to discuss how the state and federal legislature operates. They will be happy to guide you to an understanding of the issues. You can choose for yourself which issues and legislation to support, and which ones not to support. However, not knowing how your state and federal legislatures work, just means you are placing your future in the hands of people you don't know. Most legislators are honest, dedicated people who care about the future. They get paid very little for their time and they deserve our appreciation. They also deserve our involvement. Without our involvement, they don't know what we want. They don't know what fair laws to pass and which unfair laws to repeal. They look to us to help them make decisions on which bills to vote for and which bills to vote against. How can they do their job unless we tell them how we feel about issues that affect us? How do they know what is good for North Carolina's motorcyclists if North Carolina's motorcyclists don't tell them.

Only a very small percentage of legislators ride motorcycles. It is our job to communicate our needs to our state and federal legislators. If we don't, we lose our voice. We lose our ability to shape the future of motorcycling. I do not want non-riders deciding what is best for me.

There are approximately 1800 riders here in North Carolina who do the bulk of the work to shape the future of motorcycling in North Carolina. Considering that there are approximately 194,000 motorcyclists in North Carolina. That means about 1% of NC riders care about their future, and 99% don't care about their future. 99% of NC riders are uninformed. They allow non-riders to make decisions for them. By not being involved, they support current laws that allow car drivers to kill them without penalty. They support reductions in our ability to customize our motorcycles. They support reductions in safety training. By being unaware, 99% of NC riders support the reduction of motorcycling in North Carolina.

If you are one of the 99% of North Carolina riders who "Just wanna ride and don't care about politics!", then you are one of the people who are hurting motorcycling and increasing the risk of injury for all motorcyclists.

Get involved now, or suffer the consequences of ignorance. Being involved in bikers' rights doesn't cost a lot of money. It doesn't take a lot of time. It only takes a few minutes every week or so to read about what is going on, and communicate with your legislators on how you feel about motorcycling issues. You can start by joining a local MRO chapter and learning about how YOUR government works.

Deb Knox of the NC CBA reminds us that: "If you can't contribute time, a donation can go a long way towards supporting those that do have the time. If you forego one night out on the town and send the money you would have spent during that night to your local PAC fund or MRO, you will be supporting the bikers' rights organizations in your state so they can continue the legislative fight. The bikers of today are well funded. Just look at the line of \$30,000 bikes at the next rally you attend. If more riders donated to the fight, additional funding would be available to increase recruiting, advertising, and safety programs."

Please don't wait until you are lying in a hospital bed, or attending a friend's funeral before you start caring about biker's rights! The \$25 you will spend on the MRO membership fee will keep you educated and informed on local and federal issues that threaten your lifestyle and jeopardize your safety. It will also enable your state MRO to become a greater political force within your state legislature.