

DON'T CALL IT A CLUNKER!

The Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) recently notified you about the new federal law that hands out vouchers for older vehicles when purchasing new vehicles. It started out as "Cash for Clunkers," and has evolved into the CARS or Car Allowance Rebate System. Basically, when you trade in an older car or truck to participating dealerships, you can get up to \$4500 from the federal government to put toward a new vehicle purchase or lease. Currently the program does not make any allowance for motorcycles.

Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) wants to change that. Senate Bill 1248 would allow for the inclusion of motorcycles in this program. SB1248 would allow up to \$2500 for a motorcycle trade. Under SB1248 you could trade in a car or a motorcycle for a new motorcycle, or an older motorcycle for new bike or car at a participating dealership.

Senator Casey isn't trying to rid the country of older motorcycles; he's trying to help some 2600 constituents from losing their jobs. It's not a secret that the York, PA Harley Davidson plant has fallen on rough times. Harley laid off 400 employees in January, and things haven't gotten better. According to a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Article, a Harley Davidson spokesperson admitted that the idea of moving the York plant was on the table, and mentioned an internal study being done to assess the viability of the plant. Additional concerns include a major union contract that is up in 2010.

Harley has to take care of Harley, and Senator Casey has to take care of his constituents, and they both happen to benefit from this legislation. The MRF has been assured that Senator Casey absolutely did not introduce this legislation at the request of Harley Davidson, but to help his constituents keep their jobs. If Harley sells more motorcycles, it bodes well for the citizens of York, PA.

Senator Casey's bill would allow motorcycles into the CARS program, but many of the details are vague. For instance, S1248 would allow for motorcycles to be eligible for the voucher from January 1, 2009 until 3 years after enactment. However, the CARS program expires on November 1, 2009 or when the funds run out, whichever comes first.

Certainly it's important to watch for accelerated end of useful life programs such as these. Temporary can become permanent with the simple stroke of a pen. The MRF believes that even the suggestion of a permanent program would warrant an all out opposition. However, the short-term nature of this particular program should be treated more as a warning sign of what we need to be ready to confront in the future. We do want motorcycles to receive the same respect and treatment as automobiles, but not at the detriment of risking losing certain communities or freedoms within the world of motorcycling.

For more information on the existing CARS program for autos, visit www.cars.gov.