

Lobby Ban Supported

Washington DC

Today, 5 Members of the House of Representatives introduced a resolution that "supports efforts to retain the ban on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's ability to lobby state legislatures using federal tax dollars and urging NHTSA to focus on crash prevention and rider education".

The ban is current Federal law, the resolution simply supports the lobby ban and puts the Obama Administration on notice that this is an important law and should remain in place.

There is recent activity to support the fact that the current Administration would like the ability back to lobby state legislatures. At a hearing, Obama's NHTSA chief, Mr. Strickland, has said the motorcycle helmet use will be the core of NHTSA's approach to motorcycle safety. He went on to say that "anything the Congress does that would support the movement of riders into helmets would produce the desired effect of safety."

So, we are pleased that Representatives Sensenbrenner (WI), Ryan (WI), Rehberg (MT), Lanborn (CO), and Petri (WI) have all sponsored H Res 1498 today, and the Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) hopes more of their colleagues will follow suit. The bill is a direct result of the MRF's spring ride to the capitol known as Bikers Inside the Beltway. A group from ABATE of Wisconsin brought this issue up with Congressman Sensenbrenner and he agreed to do the resolution.

Prior to 1996, NHTSA could and did send paid staff to State legislatures, uninvited, to testify in favor of State helmet laws. This irked the constituents and Members of Congress, who felt that it was a waste of tax payer money. They felt that the feds should not be able to use taxpayer moneys against the will of the taxpayers. So, Congress passed a law that forbids NHTSA staff from entering state assemblies uninvited. Sensenbrenner led the charge back in '96.

He had this to say about the issue "It is the job of Congress to defend the freedom and individual responsibilities that motorcycle riders across the nation enjoy as they travel the open roads of America," Congressman Sensenbrenner said. "Mr. Strickland's plan greatly concerns me as it is not the job of the federal government to create one-size-fits-all helmet laws. Mr. Strickland appears to be intent on pursuing all means possible to enact mandatory helmet laws, either at the federal level or by violating the principles of the 10th Amendment and bullying the States into enacting mandatory helmet laws."

Down the Road

It's with a heavy heart that we have to report this next bit, as many of you know, Sputnik Strain passed away last week. For those of you who aren't familiar with Sputnik's life work. I'll try to sum it up. Sputnik organized the State of Texas motorcyclists and convinced a bulk of them to run for elected office. He was so effective, that by 1996, the entire State House and Senate were run by biker majorities. It didn't matter to Sput if you were a Republican or a Democrat, just that you were a biker. They held the majority until just few years ago. It is, without question, a feat that has gone unrivaled in the motorcyclists' political world. Services for Sputnik Strain are going to be held July 10th, in Austin, Texas.