

WINTER WHEREABOUTS - This winter was my third trip to the ABATE of PA Legislative and Leadership seminar. Remarkably, this year was the 25th anniversary of the premier motorcycle conference in the keystone state. The multi-day event is packed with educational opportunities and draws attendees from across the entire country, this year totaling about 400 bikers. Hats off to Charlie Umbenhauer and his top-notch team. Thanks from the Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) for including us.

NEW HAMPSHIRE - New Hampshire is one of three states at this point that allow all riders to decide what types of personal protection equipment they want wear with the exception of eyewear. So it's troubling that this last bastion of freedom has been attacked by the same state representative for the past two years. Judith Day, a democrat representing the touristy sea coast area of New Hampshire, has introduced a mandatory helmet law and a motorcycle sound emissions law (more on that later) two years in a row.

Both bills were heard in the New Hampshire House Transportation Committee last Thursday, and MRF Vice President of Government Relations Jeff Hennie testified in opposition to both bills at the request of the New Hampshire Motorcyclists' Rights Organization (NHMRO). Attendance at the hearing was expected to be so large that they had to schedule it to take place on the actual House floor in the state capitol building. Approximately 400 motorcyclists were in attendance. There was the usual support for the helmet bill (HB 1162), the hospital associations, victim's family, the bill sponsor and a handful of her colleagues (although she was never able to convince any of her fellow members of the NH state house to co-sponsor the bill). At one point during her floor speech, she defended her lack of support from her constituents and her colleagues by speculating, "Because they probably feel intimidated."

Representative Day's second motorcycle bill, HB 1261 to reduce motorcycle noise, was also heard that day, and once again the MRF testified before committee. Day decided last year that motorcycles make too much noise in her touristy beach district, so she wants to overturn state law and drastically reduce the allowable sound from 106 decibels to 82 decibels. However, she doesn't want to use an actual sound test at the point of inspection as is the case now. Instead she wants law enforcement to look at stopped, standing, or parked motorcycles for the manufacturer-required EPA stamp to determine that their pipes meet all federal standards. This is, of course, problematic for a number of reasons, all of which were pointed out to the committee. Visibility of the stamp and tampering with stock pipes, not to mention giving law enforcement the ability to issue \$300 dollar citation for noise to bikes that aren't even running, were just a few of the many points raised.

The four hundred plus bikers were respectful of the Chairman's requests, stuck to the allotted speaking time, and refrained from boos or hisses. Those in attendance were a classy, effective group of motorcyclists from the New England region.

Feb 2, 2010 the NH House Transportation committee voted unanimously "Inexpedient To Legislate" or ITL on both bills. In New Hampshire, the full house votes on every bill. However, a state house committee vote of ITL essentially kills the bill, and packages it with a group of other bills also labeled ITL, once it reaches the house floor. But the bill's sponsor still has the ability to force discussion on the bill and give it a stand alone vote. As of press time, the bill's sponsor had not done that. The House is expected to consider the measure the week of February 8, 2010.

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION (CPSC) - As expected, the CPSC issued its report to Congress on Friday January 15, and unfortunately did not change its position on the exemption of youth off-road motorcycles and ATVs from the ban of sale in the USA. The stay of enforcement on the issue has just over a year remaining. This will continue to heat up as we put pressure on Congress to address this issue.

The MRF will keep you updated on these and any other issues effecting motorcyclists.