

The purpose of this Guide is to provide our members with a complete overview of all the issues currently affecting motorcyclist's rights in Pennsylvania.

It is essential that every member of A.B.A.T.E. become familiar with the material in this guide. Once armed with the knowledge presented here, you will be prepared to respond accurately during interviews with news media representatives.

To avoid misrepresentations of our organization, or our position on motorcyclist's rights issues, it is recommended that a copy of this guide be left with the interviewer.

Carry a copy when you're out riding!



Public Relations

Media Guide Issues & Positions



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Rev. C 02/07

Alliance of Bikers
Aimed Toward Education

What is A.B.A.T.E. of Pennsylvania?

A.B.A.T.E. is the "Alliance of Bikers Aimed Toward Education". It is an organization of motorcyclists dedicated to the protection of the individual rights of motorcyclists through political change, public education, and charitable works. As part of this mission, we are also active in the elimination of unfair legislation as it concerns motorcyclists; promoting motorcycle safety through both motorist and rider education; and improving the image of motorcyclists to the general public.

Our goals and purposes are to keep motorcyclists, members, and the public informed, to promote safe riding habits, and to encourage favorable legislation for motorcyclists. These are accomplished through a monthly newsletter, e-mail alerts, safety and education programs, working with the state and federal legislatures, and voter registration promotion.

Since 1983, A.B.A.T.E. has represented the interests of motorcyclists riding Pennsylvania's roads. Through a variety of programs, A.B.A.T.E. is working to protect and preserve the rights of over 750,000 licensed motorcyclists. Regardless of whether you enjoy touring, or cruising, A.B.A.T.E. of Pennsylvania is here to serve you. Your help and support is needed to protect and promote your right to ride.

Look Twice - Save A Life

Motorcycles Are Everywhere

A.B.A.T.E. Accomplishments

Motorcycle friendly legislation introduced by A.B.A.T.E. of PA:

- **TOLLS** - Motorcyclists using the PA Turnpike, and taking advantage of the E-Z Pass, now receive a 25% discount on tolls.
- **HELMET USE** - Modified the helmet law to allow adult motorcyclists 21 years of age and older with two years experience or successfully completing the PA Motorcycle Safety Course, to choose when to wear a helmet.
- **HANDLEBAR HEIGHT** - Eliminated any restriction on handlebar heights.
- **UNRESTRICTED PARKING** - Two or more motorcycles may park within the same parking space without the risk of being arbitrarily ticketed.
- **EMISSIONS TESTING** - Motorcycles are exempt from emissions testing.
- **C.A.T. FUND** - removed the unfair catastrophic trust fund surcharge on moving violations from never-eligible-to-participate motorcyclists.
- **LICENSE PLATES** - Successful in obtaining Vanity Plates, Veterans Plates, and handicapped stickers for motorcycles.
- **RIDER EDUCATION** - Increased funding for the Motorcycle Safety Program by increasing the surcharge on motorcycle permits and licenses from \$2 to \$5 annually. The additional funds were used to increase training capacity.
- **INCREASED PENALTIES** - Stiffened penalties for careless driving offenses that kill or seriously injure others.
- **AUXILLARY LIGHTING** - Amended the Vehicle Code to allow for auxiliary lighting on motorcycles. The bill provides greater protection to motorcycle riders.
- **SENATOR BELL** - Designated RT 322 (from RT 1 to I-95) in Delaware County as Senator Clarence Bell Memorial Highway.
- **PASSENGERS** - Defeated legislation that would have placed an age limit on passengers.

A.B.A.T.E. of PA Position Regarding Health Insurance Requirements for Motorcyclists

The question of whether motorcyclists should be required to show proof of health insurance (in any amount) as a condition for being allowed to ride without a helmet comes up frequently.

Voluntary Helmet Use - Position & Comment

The Alliance of Bikers Aimed Toward Education (ABATE) of Pennsylvania encourages the voluntary use of helmets by adult motorcyclists as part of a comprehensive motorcycle safety program.

ABATE of Pennsylvania believes that accident prevention and avoidance are more important to significantly reducing injuries and fatalities than any mandatory equipment laws.

To better understand the organization's position on helmet laws, it is first necessary to make a distinction between the use of helmets and mandatory helmet laws. Some members of society tend to view the helmet only as a mechanical safety device in the same category as seat belts. What they fail to realize is that it is viewed by motorcyclists as an accessory of personal apparel connected with their chosen lifestyle and their right as adults to make their own decisions. Unlike seatbelts, helmets do not come "standard" with motorcycles and represent a separate purchase. Helmet laws, on the other hand, are a manifestation of society's belief that its members lack the wisdom to make decisions about personal safety and must therefore be subject to arbitrary laws. This is a concept we must reject.

The answer to motorcycle safety is training and awareness, not mandated Helmet laws. In 2002, ABATE of PA supported legislation to increase funding for the Pennsylvania Motorcycle Safety Program. Governor Schweiker signed that legislation into law. The surcharge on motorcycle licenses and permits were increased from \$2 to \$5 per year. This increased funding has allowed the MSP to open 10 new sites around the state with more on the way in the near future. Presently, there are 69 training sites operating. According to the MSP, 27,500 students were trained in 2006.

Contrary to whatever emotional hearsay some opposing organizations publish, there is a motorcycle helmet law in Pennsylvania. Helmets are still required for ALL motorcycle riders under 21, and for those with less than two years riding experience, unless they have successfully completed the free state-approved rider safety course.

While the law does allow freedom of choice in the use of helmets, it also contains safeguards for those not yet trained or skilled enough to make an informed decision on helmet safety. Enactment of the Freedom Of Choice bill on helmets represents what our founding fathers intended when they wrote the constitution... that government works best with the consent of the governed.

Laws mandating helmet use at all times have no significant effect on the safety of motorcycling in general, although they may or may not be beneficial in individual accident circumstances. The decision on when to wear a helmet while operating a motorcycle should remain with each responsible adult rider.

Rather than focus on mandatory helmet use, which has been shown repeatedly not to affect population statistics on motorcycle fatalities, appropriate attention should be directed toward reducing riding under the influence and toward increasing the effective motorcycle operator education and licensing programs in the state.

For us, this is an issue of personal freedom. Mandatory helmet laws are annoying and unnecessary to an extremely small minority of citizens who would prefer to make their own decisions on an issue which has no effect on anyone else, **other than to become a symbol of what's wrong with being free.**

ABATE Promotes Motorcycle Safety!

Operation Save A Life (OSAL) is a motorcycle safety & awareness program intended for school and civic groups to encourage automobile drivers to be alert to motorcycle operators on the highways with the aim of helping everyone to "share the road" safely.

The presentation consists of a video, safety tips and a question-and-answer session presented by speakers provided "free of charge" by A.B.A.T.E. of Pennsylvania.

Through OSAL, A.B.A.T.E. of PA is teaching motorists how to properly "share the road" with motorcyclists in an ongoing effort to reduce accidents.

Operation Save-a-Life has been approved by Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation and Education for use in driver education programs throughout the state.

Pennsylvania Motorcycle Safety Program - The Motorcycle Safety Program (MSP) was established to teach riders of all skill levels the basic fundamentals needed in order to safely operate a motorcycle. The MSP was created from legislation in 1984 and began one year later. To date, over 277,408 people have taken the MSP. In 2006, 27,500 students were trained at the 69 training sites!

MSP Instructor Reimbursement - Encouraging its experienced members to participate as Certified Instructors of the Motorcycle Safety Course.

Motorcycle Safety Month - Work with the legislators to designate May as "Motorcycle Safety and Awareness Month in Pennsylvania."

Poster & Lawn Sign Campaign - Distribute posters and lawn signs promoting motorcycle safety and awareness.

Education Materials - Continuing to produce and direct educational materials in an on-going effort to eliminate riding under the influence of alcohol.

PSA's - Our chapters have been very successful in getting PSA's aired for Motorcycle Safety & Awareness month.

Work with PennDOT to ensure safe roads - Routinely engaged in communication on motorcycle safety and road hazards.

Highway Digital Signs - Worked with PennDOT to post the new motorcycle safety messages, "Save A Life. Look Twice. Motorcycles are Everywhere!"

Position Regarding Health Insurance Requirements for Motorcyclists

The question of whether motorcyclists should be required to show proof of health insurance (in any amount) as a condition for being allowed to ride without a helmet comes up frequently.

A.B.A.T.E. of PA's position is that such a requirement is discriminatory and any proposed benefit from such a requirement is without foundation.

The notion that any group of citizens engaging in a legal activity be required to show proof of health insurance before engaging in that activity is, to A.B.A.T.E. of PA's knowledge, found nowhere in Pennsylvania law, and would be repugnant to any group that found itself the target of such legislation.

By characterizing an activity as "at-risk", any such activity could become regulated as requiring some sort of health insurance. Downhill skiers could be required to show proof of health insurance before getting on the lift. Hunters could be required to carry proof of health insurance in the field. Parents could be required to show proof of health insurance before purchasing skateboards for their children.

Pennsylvania's motorcyclists do not want to be the first group singled out for such an erosion of civil liberty. Adding to the discriminatory nature of the idea is the fact that such insurance is not offered for sale at any price to our knowledge.

In addition to being discriminatory, the need for health insurance provisions is without foundation. In 2006, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee completed a study of the impact of the 2003 changes to Pennsylvania's helmet law (1).

The report showed that the motorcycle fatality rate remained the same from 2000/2001/2002 (5.9 per 10,000 registrations) to 2004/2005 (5.9 per 10,000 registrations).

Also, the incidence rate of major and moderate injuries to motorcyclists declined from 68.9 per 10,000 registrations in 2001/2002 to 64.5 per 10,000 registrations in 2004/2005.

The report's data showed that helmet usage declined by 19% over the period in question. Clearly, the presence or absence of a helmet alone is not a determining factor in the nature and severity of injuries sustained by motorcyclists, and should not be the basis for a discriminatory requirement to possess health insurance that is not for sale.

(1) The change allowed for riders over the age of 21 who have had their motorcycle license for at least two years or who have completed the state's Motorcycle Safety Course to choose whether to wear a helmet or not.