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April 6, 2006

The Honorable xxx
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Representative xxx:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, an alliance of consumer, health and safety groups and insurance companies working together to make America's roads safer, urges you to vote "no" on **HB 994**, legislation that would repeal Missouri's life-saving all-rider motorcycle helmet law. Missouri has had an all-rider helmet law in effect since 1967. During this time, Missouri has had significantly fewer per-capita motorcycle injuries and deaths than states without an all-rider law. Undeniably, **HB 994** would cause a sharp increase in motorcycle-related fatalities and injuries, including brain injuries.

CHOICE vs. SAFETY

Many motorcycle activists argue that helmet use should be a choice and that despite many states that do not require helmet use, riders choose to wear them anyway. This is quite contrary to empirical data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). In nearby Arkansas, which also enacted its all-rider helmet law in 1967 and repealed it in 1997, helmet usage dropped from 97% before the repeal, to 52% approximately one year after the repeal was enacted. Similar results occurred in Texas, which also repealed its all-rider law in 1997, and also had a previous 97% rate. One year after its repeal, the helmet usage dropped to 66%. Both states experienced significant increases in the severity of injuries and the number of fatalities due to motorcycle crashes. According to NHTSA, motorcycle operator fatalities increased by 21% in Arkansas and 31% in Texas after the repeals. Economic and societal costs have also increased commensurately in both states. This is a typical outcome when all-rider helmet laws are repealed.

In the first twelve months after California's all-rider law took effect, there were 194 fewer motorcycle fatalities and 1,380 fewer people hospitalized for motorcycle crash injuries. Clearly, the all-rider motorcycle helmet law has significantly improved the safety of motorcycle riders in California, saved precious lives and scarce health care dollars. This is a law that has worked for the benefit of all Californians and will continue to do so as long as the risk of a motorcycle crash exists.

EXTERNAL COST


In addition to saving lives, motorcycle helmets significantly reduce the severity of injuries sustained during a motorcycle crash. Studies have consistently found that helmet use reduced the fatality rate, the probability and severity of head injuries, the cost of medical treatment, the length of hospital stay, the necessity for special medical treatments, and the probability of long-term disability. With the average cost of hospital treatment for a motorcycle injury of \$40,000, and, according to the fiscal note for **HB 994**, an increase of 509 head-injured patients per year if this bill is enacted, can your state really afford the economic costs associated with repealing your all-rider motorcycle helmet law?

FISCAL NOTE FOR **HB 994**

Although the fiscal note prepared by the Committee on Legislative Research reports that there will be a significant increase in head-injured patients each year, should the law be repealed, it omits several important facts and seems to use inconsistent methodologies. It is highly unlikely, for instance, that if **HB 994** were enacted the financial impact of an additional 509 head-injured patients on the Department of Health and Senior Services would be only \$33,000 per year. Testimony from medical experts in other states indicates the long term costs of care for those permanently and *unnecessarily* brain injured can easily exceed \$100,000 a year for every year they survive. The average age at the time of injury from a motorcycle crash is 39. US life expectancy for men is 75. This means **costs over a lifetime as a result of a single serious brain injury could easily result in a multi-million dollar per-capita price tag**. And most of those who require around-the-clock assistance after a brain injury rely upon Medicaid to pay the bills. The fiscal note for **HB 994** also shows no fiscal impact to Missouri's Medicaid and Medicare programs. For these reasons alone the fiscal note should be re-examined.

If Missouri's legislative session adjourns without acting on **HB 994** the all-rider motorcycle helmet law will remain in place. This law has saved hundreds of lives, and millions of Missouri tax dollars. I urge you **not to support HB 994**.

Sincerely,



Judith Lee Stone
President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety