

SKILLED MOTORCYCLIST ASSOCIATION—RESPONSIBLE, TRAINED AND EDUCATED RIDERS, INC.
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Motorcycle Helmet Repeal a Major Mistake

Scottville, MI – Legislators are poised to make a major mistake that will cut a huge hole in our motorcyclist-safety efforts, increase the number of motorcyclists killed, increase the number of devastating injuries and increase societal costs. Repealing our helmet law is a step in the wrong direction. Helmet repeal amounts to a tax on every citizen just so a few bikers can ride with the wind in their hair.

Legislators are responding to decades of pressure from a minority biker group and are ignoring the research, the experts and the desire of the majority of Michigan's citizens. The research is undeniable, overwhelming and easy to find. To access research that supports the effectiveness of helmets and all-rider helmet laws, go to the Web site of the Skilled Motorcyclist Association—Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc., at www.smarter-usa.org.

Repeal of helmet laws results in an increase in deaths, injuries and monetary and nonmonetary quality-of-life costs. Monetary costs include payments for hospital and physician care, emergency medical transport, rehabilitation, prescriptions, allied health services, medical devices, nursing-home care, insurance-claims processing, coroner and premature burial costs (for fatalities), future earning (including wages, fringe benefits and housework lost by the injured), public services (including initial police response and follow-up investigation as well as emergency transport and fire services) and property damage. According to the University of Michigan Traffic Research Institute (*Societal Costs of Traffic Crashes and Crimes in Michigan: 2011 Update*), crash-involved motorcyclists account for \$400 million in annual monetary costs for the motorcyclist only, not including the occupants of other vehicles who may have also been involved and not including the nonmonetary quality-of-life costs suffered by families.

The emotional toll for Michigan citizens who lose a friend or loved one in a motorcycle crash has a steep financial counterpart that we all pay. The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control tells us that our current helmet law saves 25 lives and \$43 million per year per 100,000 registered motorcycles. Given that in 2010 Michigan had 266,772 motorcycle registrations (Michigan Traffic Crash Facts), we could expect an annual increase of as many as 66 deaths and as much as \$114.7 million in costs added to the estimated \$400 million we already pay.

Many legislators were elected based on their promise to provide “less government” and to fix our economy. Repealing our helmet law will be less governmental regulation for a few bikers, but will add what amounts to a tax on the rest of us that will continue to mount year after year to pay for the additional costs. We want good government, not just less government. We want costs controlled, not unnecessarily increased. We might be willing to pay for better education or better roads or programs that will lead to more jobs, but we are not willing to pay simply to fulfill the wishes of a few bikers who want to ride with the wind in their hair. Write to the governor and tell him so.