



ADVOCATES
for Highway & Auto Safety

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**STATEMENT OF HENRY JASNY, VICE PRESIDENT OF
ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY
ON 9% INCREASE PROJECTED IN
MOTORCYCLE FATALITIES**

Governors and State Legislatures Must Act Now to Pass Life-Saving All-Rider Helmet Laws

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) Traffic fatalities of motorcyclists increased by about 9% based on preliminary data for 2012 compared to 2011, to more than 5,000 lives lost according to a report issued today by the Governors Highway Safety Association. 2012 will be the 14th out of the last 15 years in which motorcyclist deaths increased, approaching an all-time high. There has been a 138% increase in annual motorcycle fatalities in the past 15 years. This dramatic increase in motorcyclist deaths shows that efforts to reduce motorcycle crashes through education and voluntary programs have failed and time and taxpayer funds have been wasted. It is a clear call for action in state legislatures to pass laws that protect motorcyclists by requiring all riders to wear helmets.

The increase in preventable deaths is unacceptable. Yet, safety groups are not surprised considering the dangerous and deadly anti-helmet law trend around the country. Michigan repealed its all-rider helmet law last year that had been saving lives for four decades, and deaths immediately increased by 18% according to the Michigan State Police. This year helmet laws have been under attack in 9 of the 19 states that have all-rider helmet laws including Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington. Numerous studies and research on the effectiveness of helmet laws are convincing, compelling and consistent. All-rider helmet laws save lives, prevent traumatic brain injuries, reduced medical costs and save taxpayer dollars. In short, everyone benefits from helmet laws.

A 2012 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated that “laws requiring all motorcyclists to wear helmets are the only strategy proven to be effective in reducing motorcyclist fatalities.” The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that helmets saved the lives of 1,617 motorcyclists in 2011 and that 703 more Americans in all states could have been saved if all motorcycle riders had worn helmets.

Additionally, the GAO report revealed that the direct measurable costs of motorcycle crashes were approximately \$16 billion. An estimated \$3 billion was saved nationally in 2010 as a result of motorcycle helmet use and an additional \$1.4 billion could have been saved if all motorcyclists had worn helmets (NHTSA, 2012). In states with an all-rider helmet law, economic costs saved to society were \$725 per registered motorcycle, compared with \$198 per registered motorcycle in states without such a law (NHTSA, 2012). Helmet use reduces the cost of medical treatment, length of hospital stay and probability of long term disability for those riders injured in crashes.

States that have repealed their all-rider helmet laws have experienced dramatic drops in helmet use and increases in fatalities. In 2003, when Pennsylvania significantly weakened its all-rider law, the result was a 66% increase in deaths of motorcyclists from head injuries and a 78% increase in motorcyclist head injury hospitalizations. Similarly, when Louisiana repealed its law in 1999, motorcycle fatalities increased by 100% and state health care costs for brain-injured motorcyclists soared as well. That is why Louisiana reinstated its law in 2004. When Florida repealed its law in 2002, fatalities jumped 21% (per 10,000 registered motorcycles). In 1998, after Kentucky repealed its law, motorcycle fatalities went up 50%. Furthermore, a 2010 study of the 1997 repeal in Texas found that deaths increased by 30% and fatality rates per vehicle miles traveled increased 25% after the repeal.

The American public understands the need for all-rider motorcycle helmet laws and overwhelmingly supports them. According to a 2000 motor vehicle occupant survey by NHTSA, 81% of Americans reported that they favored mandatory helmet use laws for all motorcyclists. A 2004 Lou Harris poll commissioned by Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety yielded similar results. This deadly upturn in motorcyclist fatalities should motivate Governors and legislative leaders to listen to the public and make passage - and not repeal - of all-rider helmet laws an urgent priority.

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (www.saferoads.org) is a coalition of consumer, public health, medical, safety and insurance organizations working together to improve highway and auto safety laws and policies in Congress, states and Executive branch agencies.

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