

SKILLED MOTORCYCLIST ASSOCIATION—RESPONSIBLE, TRAINED AND EDUCATED RIDERS, INC.
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GAO Seeks Grant Program Improvements

Scottville, MI – The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), in a report to congressional committees issued Nov. 2012, says increasing federal funding flexibility and identifying research priorities top its list of recommendations to help support states' motorcyclist-safety efforts. The report is a detailed, well-researched and well-referenced 60-plus-page document based on available 2010 information. The Skilled Motorcyclist Association—Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc. (SMARTER) has developed a listing of its significant findings. The full report and the summary of findings are available at <http://www.smarter-usa.org/news/notable/>.

The use of the federal funding, known as the Section 2010 motorcycle safety grant program, has been severely limited, handcuffing state safety efforts. While skill training is an obvious important aspect of motorcyclist-safety programs and increasing motorist awareness makes logical sense, there is no compelling research indicating that either reduces the likelihood of a rider being in a crash. Comprehensive motorcyclist-safety efforts must also include components that reduce the risk of injury or death in the event of a crash, and these two traditional strategies obviously do nothing in that regard.

What the GAO is suggesting is that Congress should change the language of the grant program so that the monies can be used for other important purposes. Motorcyclist-safety experts have long recognized the need to address factors such as alcohol impairment; lack of proper licensing; inadequate protective gear; lack of information about the benefits of helmet use, resulting, where not required by law, riders' choosing not to wear a helmet; little or no enforcement of current helmet-use laws; little or no use of alcohol-enforcement zones; encouraging motorcyclists to increase conspicuity; and minimum education of law enforcement officers and judges about motorcyclist-safety issues. These are all examples of important components of comprehensive motorcyclist-safety programs that receive little or no attention because of the limited allowable use of the available federal funds.

It is time for the limits to be removed. Motorcyclists deserve better. Congress should immediately implement the recommendations of the GAO report.

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The Skilled Motorcyclist Association—Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc. (SMARTER) is dedicated to enhancing motorcyclist safety by educating riders and the public for the advancement of responsible riding.