

MRF REPORTS

Ride With
The Leaders™

A BI-MONTHLY INFORMATION BULLETIN FROM THE MOTORCYCLE RIDERS FOUNDATION

MOTORCYCLE RIDERS FOUNDATION, PO Box 1808, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013

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Congress Back in DC



Jeff Hennie
MRF Vice President
Government Relations

THE STATE OF THE UNION address given by the President at the end of January generally marks the unofficial start of Congress. Although both chambers have been sworn in for the better part of two weeks now, very few legislative miles have been traveled. But, after the State of the Union and the President's agenda is clear, Congress gets to work.

Highway Bill

One of the main priorities on the Motorcycle Riders Foundation legislative agenda is to work for inclusion of motorcycle safety language in the Transportation Equity Act (TEA bill). The TEA bill is a carryover bill from last Congress that authorizes funds for transportation projects. The previous bill expired almost a year and a half ago, leaving the nation's highways and mass transit programs almost cashless. The current attempt at authorizing legislation struggled to make it out of committee and to the floor in both bodies, largely due to enormous pressure from President Bush to tighten the belt on the bill and reduce the funding levels that both the House and Senate were advocating.

The TEA bill has yet to be introduced again this Congress. The MRF has learned from authors of the House bill that it will be introduced the week of February 7th, and the House version will contain the

motorcycle safety language for which the MRF and SMROs worked so hard to have included. The Senate counterpart legislation has not been introduced yet. Due to a shakeup in leadership of the relevant Senate committees, no work has been done as yet. The changing of the guard at the Senate Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over part of the bill, resulted with Senator John McCain (R-AZ) (who some blame for halting progress on the bill in the previous Congress) being ousted. Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) now holds the full committee gavel. Stevens is a long-time friend of all motorcyclists, but in particular those from Alaska who have worked so hard to keep him elected. For that, we thank ABATE of Alaska.

Is It All Greek To You?

The "language" is the specific legislation that the MRF, SMROs and Congressional Members and staff put together to accomplish two things: Create an official advisory council that would advise the Federal Highway Administration on motorcycle-friendly road, bridge and barrier design; and set up a grant program that would make funds available for states to implement or improve motorcycle safety training and awareness programs.

Getting It Done

Will it happen? Can they get it done? These questions plague me daily. There are lots of limiting factors surrounding the highway bill,



Travel, Growth and Change

Karen Bolin
MRF President



IT IS TIME to offer a seasonal report on the fine condition of the MRF. Travel, growth and change are the words that apply. My problem, as I write this, is to try and put it all in cohesive fashion. I'll start at the beginning.

Since Meeting of the Minds, many MRF Board members have visited various SMRO events. Personally, I would like to thank ABATE of South Dakota for a week-end of doing what I love most: Spending time with motorcyclists in a state capitol. The members of ABATE of South Dakota hold an organized, impressive event. Next week I'll be off to the winter MRF Board Meeting in Little Rock, which will bring time with ABATE of Arkansas. Next a trip to Washington, D.C., in March with members of my SMRO. April brings BEAST of the EAST in New Hampshire. June a ride to BEST of the WEST in Boise, Idaho. This will be the second trip to Boise. The first was a wonderful weekend at the Idaho STAR yearly banquet. This followed another wonderful weekend with the rider ed. pros in Oregon. It was a privilege to be there and watch ABATE of Oregon receive a well-earned award.

Jay Jackson has been to Michigan. Lynn Oldenburg, Carol Simpson and Jeff Hennie attended ABATE of Pennsylvania's State Seminar. Jeff has also been to Missouri, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Dave Dwyer will be visiting ABATE of North Dakota. Mark Buckner will represent the MRF at Heartland STEAM. And never forgotten is the conference dedicated to rights...and baskets: Mid-South MILE. Miles France, Jeff and I attended.

Not only is the MRF attracting new members, but new MRF Representatives. This is a membership-driven organization, and will remain so. As such I would like to thank all who have recently joined the MRF, and are receiving their first copy of the *Reports*. I would also like to thank all who have joined fellow riders as MRF State Representatives. It's an impressive list: Jens "Teach" Andersen, California; Jim "Legs" Korte, Illinois; Jane Howell, Utah; Donald "Duck" Smith, West Virginia; Barbara Tittle, Ohio; Greg Bodin, Texas; Steve "Bullitt" McQueen, Indiana; Max Green, Louisiana; and James Duyck, Missouri. I'd also like to thank Jim Erb and Jiggs Cressy for becoming the new MRF Assistant Representatives in South Dakota.

The simple truth is, without all of you, our members and representatives, the MRF would not exist.

And as always, there are changes. The MRF website has, and is, undergoing a redo. Look for many new features in the months to come. Perhaps the most important is the creation of areas dedicated to SMRO information. Over the coming months conference registration will be easier, products will available online and JD will be working on advancements in communications.

The MRF has welcomed Sarah Muckenhaupt to the DC office and Fred Rau as the new Editor of the *Reports*. Tim Nelson has stepped down as Director of MRF State Representatives after several years of dedicated service.

A new year begins. A new year of travel, growth and change. All in tune to the fine miles of protecting the fine miles of rights. I look forward to seeing you on the road.

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Is PAC a Dirty Word?

Michael Kerr
Director MRFPAC

Let's look at it. PAC, an acronym, when we spell it out, is "Political Action Committee." The first word is "political." Is there anything inherently wrong with politics? The way it is practiced at times, perhaps, but on the whole our political system functions pretty well (even though we may not always agree with the results). The second word is "action." Isn't action preferred to inaction? Let's hope we all agree that combining the first two words "political action," and putting those words into practice, is the correct way to affect public policy. A "committee," as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is "A group of people officially delegated to perform a function." Noting nefarious about PACs so far – of course we are talking semantics, and not the real politic.

What happens when we move into that world of PACs? No doubt many Americans envision a dark and sinister environment, where anonymous middle-age men attired in suits made by the finest tailors in London, smoke big cigars, and dole out huge checks to their friends on the hill with an approving nod of the head; a *quid pro quo* having been established. The interests of the public once again fall-en victim to greed, and a corrupt system.

The reality crashes head on with that notion. Many of the largest PACs are affiliated with labor unions, giving a voice to the working men and women in this country. Some are aligned with special interest groups that wish to advocate the preservation of the US Constitution. Some advocate the advancement of racial minorities, others work to advance women in the political arena. For most every issue, there is a PAC, and fortunately for motorcyclists, we are represented as well.

PACs contribute to our democracy by allowing people such as ourselves to band together, pool our resources and support candidates for congress that we feel represent our interests. This gives us a far greater impact than if we would, as individuals, donate to the same candidate

PACs operate entirely aboveboard. Arcane regulations must be followed to the letter. The day-to-day function of a PAC is blindingly tiresome work. Most reporting done today is done electronically (MRFPAC is required to report electronically). The application software provided by the FEC is, at best, described by most as, "not user friendly." A report must pass a pre-validation by the FEC or it won't even be accepted into their system. Minor errors can cause the report to be rejected. Often the filer will work into the night to correct problems. The person doing the filing has the choice of making often difficult corrections or explaining to the parent organization as to why they are being fined for filing a late report.

Federal PACs, by law, may donate only \$5000 per election to a candidate. While \$5000 may seem like a lot of money, it is a very tiny percentage of what it costs to run a campaign. In the 2002 cycle, the average member of the house spent \$898,184 on their campaign. The senate was even more pricy, where senate candidates spent on average \$4,812,159 to win a seat. \$5000 is not about to bring about any legislative changes.

PACs today are highly-regulated, so regulated that many of us are concerned that free speech may be the victim of increased federal regulation. For example, MRFPAC is required by law to make a best effort attempt to obtain the names, occupation and employer of those donating to us. We are to report this to the Federal Election Commission (FEC), and at that point it becomes public record. The FEC goes so far as to post it on its web site, so all the world knows if you made a donation of \$200 to support this effort.

What's so bad about that? Well, let's just say you are a medical professional, who is an avid motorcyclist, and don't believe that the government should make the choice whether you should wear a helmet or not. You join your local SMRO and then the MRF. You attend the Meeting of the Minds and, in the part of the live auction that benefits the PAC, your bid of \$500 for a leather jacket wins. We follow procedures, collect all required information, and forward it to the FEC.

At a later date, you decide to run for office in the association that governs your profession. Your opponent circulates copies of official FEC records showing you as a "major contributor" to MRFPAC, which the opponent spins as an "anti-helmet lobby." Members of your association (who are by and large pro-helmet law) are appalled, and you lose the election.

Even though you have never taken a public position on helmet laws, your exercising your right of free speech in supporting a political action committee, has been used to your detriment.

Bradley Smith, a commissioner with the FEC, had this to say in regard to disclosure: "Yet today, under the guise of campaign finance reform and political disclosure, the federal government compiles and maintains a database of citizen political activity. This data is then made available, over the internet, to anyone who wants to use it: Your nosy neighbor; the phone marketer; a prospective employer; or government agencies. All of this is done in the name of the public's "right to know." The loss of privacy inherent in these requirements should give us pause."

Financially supporting candidates that represent our interests is the American way. The dirty words are increased limitations on political speech. Don't be fooled by those who, under guise of reform, take more and more of our rights away.

109th Congress of the United States of America is in session
We are there...watching

**SUPPORT YOUR VOICE IN
WASHINGTON, DC**

Help Build MRFPAC!

Contributions of \$5 and \$10 can go a long way to make our voices heard in DC and from coast-to-coast

PO Box 1808, Washington, DC 20013-1808
Please make checks payable to MRFPAC
Donations to MRFPAC are not Tax Deductible
We cannot accept corporate checks

Membership Incentive Program 2004/2005

Miles France
MRF Membership Director

We are tasking you all as the MRF State Reps, Assistant State Reps and Recruiters, to continue your battle in the trenches and come up with new members. We all know there is no perfect selling technique other than the "passion" you carry and share with people you come in contact with. Notice I said "people you come in contact with." This means throughout your daily lives, not just at biker events. Try and touch on biker issues with everyone you talk to. You'd be surprised how many of these folks may end up supporting our organization after you explain the issues with facts. Accurate and truthful dialogue can go along ways, and proves our integrity from the start!

MRF renewals are our members that carry our organization on from year to year, and it is so important that we maintain these members with as much respect as any new member. Mark your calendar and make the time to make that personal contact to say, "Thank you" for continuing on as an MRF member - they do appreciate knowing they're recognized as a supporting member. Emails and letters are great, but there's nothing like that old phone call to bring a more personal touch. This should be broken down into six-month time frames. The first call also could serve as a reminder that the member is coming due without even mentioning it. The second could be that, "Right On Brother/ Sister," for continuing to help our fight! Share this responsibility with MRF leaders within your state. Let them know how much we appreciate them and how much we appreciate their continued support.

Each member is vital to the MRF. Jeff Huggins (Leadville, Colorado ABATE D6 Representative for many years) once described ABATE as a "spoke wheel." The "hub" is the state and the "spokes" represent the districts that support the "hub." The MRF is no different, with each state being a "spoke" and the MRF as the

"hub." Let's increase the size of our "spokes," and roll into the future "totally stronger!"

Here is the program I have set up.

MRF BOD's are not eligible for any of the prizes. It won't stop us who sit on the board from signing up new members, but we will not take a part in winnings.

MRF State Reps will be tasked with signing up 10 new members.

MRF Assistant Reps will be tasked with signing up 5 new members.

MRF Recruiters will be tasked with signing up 20 new members.

20 "New MRF members" will get you one chance at the drawing, each five "additional new MRF members" will get you a second chance and for each five more you'll receive an additional chance.

You should either commit to recruiting the number of new members assigned to your position, or delegate the responsibility to someone who will. These tasks are more than doable without a lot of effort, other than your time and passion.

1st Prize \$500.00

2nd Prize \$250.00

3rd Prize \$125.00

Plus, the MRF Rep, Assistant or Recruiter who signs up the most new members will receive an MRF jacket of their choice that we have in stock.

The prizes will be drawn at the MOTM in Little Rock, Ark. September 2005.

Good luck to all of you, and remember this is to help bring our organization's numbers up to increase our strength and influence on the issues we deal with from year to year. Within our struggle to maintain our freedoms to ride and rider education as a key to safety throughout America we need to let Joe Public know that we do exist and fight hard for our rights and always vote. I see this as an achievable goal if we work at it on the same team level we always have. But now we need to become more assertive and put a little more pressure on those naysayers and hand them that pen and collect those dues they've been saying they have been going to take care of for so long!