

MRF REPORTS



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A BI-MONTHLY INFORMATION BULLETIN FROM THE MOTORCYCLE RIDERS FOUNDATION
MOTORCYCLE RIDERS FOUNDATION, 236 MASSACHUSETTS AVE. NE, SUITE 510, WASHINGTON, DC 20002

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A Year of Success for the MRF

How do you measure success? Is it the number of miles on your odometer, the balance in your bank account, the size of your family or the smiles you spread? There are many ways that we define and measure our individual success stories, and each of us considers them differently, but when we, as politically active motorcyclists, work together and measure our success as one group, that is when we can truly move mountains.

Going It Alone

This past year has been one of those years when we did move mountains before the United States Congress. The MRF *and only the MRF* can take full credit for addressing the current motorcycle safety problems, and providing real solutions. The MRF is the only national motorcycling organization that is taking on the issues of improving access to rider education, expanding and/or implementing motorcycle awareness campaigns, and taking the lead in advising the federal government on road, bridge and barrier design, and how they ultimately affect motorcyclists.

The MRF, along with many state motorcycle rights organizations and individual motorcyclists, accomplished the entire legislative agenda that the MRF has been working on. The motorcycle safety grant program is signed into public law, and won't be compromised to force states to mandate universal helmet laws. Thanks for trying, Mr. Lautenberg. The grant program authorizes an unprecedented \$25 million to be spent over the next four years. The only catch is that you and your state motorcycle program administrator must apply for and spend this new pot of money. More on that later.

Against all odds the MRF also fought for and got language in the highway bill that establishes an advisory council that will address road infrastructure issues and how motorcycles are considered when the nation's engineers design and build our roads, bridges and barriers. Until now, motorcycles were merely nuisance vehicles that did not warrant any special consideration.

Motorcyclists Are Not Going Away

With your help, the MRF has changed the way motorcycles are viewed in our nation's capitol. Now, when motorcycles are mentioned, the bureaucrats listen with all ears. No longer are we, as motorcyclists, dismissed as a small portion of the motoring public that do not need any



Jeff Hennie
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attention. A new era of motorcycling is coming, and it is the MRF that has brought us into what could very well be the golden age of on-road motorcycling. If you helped by visiting DC or making contact with your federal elected officials, pat yourself on the back.

Grants And More Grants

As I mentioned, the grant program is now signed into public law, and money will be available starting in 2006. The explicit details have not been released yet, but here is basically how it is going to work: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will be overseeing the grant process, more specifically the office of injury control operation and resources. The details will be printed in the Federal Register in the near future.

The MRF will assist any state in maneuvering through

the often-confusing grant application process employed by the federal government. Your state department that oversees the motorcycle programs must initially apply for the grant money, which is no less than \$100,000 per state. The state department can then re-issue the money to a non-profit in the state that will carry out the letter of the law. In other words, your SMRO can use some of the money to put into practice an awareness campaign, or to expand access to rider training. So, it is your job as leaders in the motorcycle community to go after the funds and put them to use. The worst thing that can happen is that we do not use the available funds. If we do not use them, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to ever again get federal dollars earmarked to be used to address any motorcycle safety issues. Don't let this monumental opportunity pass us by.

There has also been talk recently that the highway bill would be gutted of its funds to help offset the massive costs of rebuilding the gulf coast, and to assist our fellow Americans who have had life and property ripped from them. I can assure that the money set aside for the motorcycle safety grant program will *not* be compromised. If (and I doubt this will happen) the highway bill is used to pay for storm damage, it will come from the "pet projects" inserted into the bill by individual members. Often referred to as "pork," these projects are generally small programs or projects important to one or two members of Congress because they can campaign on them. Bike trails, parks, a new unnecessary bridge or tunnel that may improve quality of life for locals -- but are unimportant in the grand scheme of our nation's highway system.

While this year saw some huge victories for the MRF, the highway bill is done without agenda items in it, the Lautenberg helmet requirement amendment was soundly defeated and the HIPAA legislation was reintroduced, there is no rest for the weary. The Congress continues to work, and that requires constant monitoring. Another highway bill will begin to be drafted in the next year or two, and certain members of Congress will continue to try to protect us from ourselves. NHTSA continues to push for helmet laws, and the EPA will continue to restrict emissions on motorcycles. It has been a landmark year for the MRF, one that I am personally very proud of, but remember, sometimes you must measure success not with what you have done, but by what hasn't yet been done. We may not see another year like this for some time, but as long as we can keep Washington from meddling with

individual states' rights and keep excess laws of off motorcyclists and their machines, well, that will be a great year as well.

Thanks to everyone who has helped make this year one of the best ever for the Motorcycle Riders Foundation.

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