

Rhoads, Debra

From: Goodyear, Carrie
Sent: Thursday, May 12, 2011 9:54 AM
To: Dem Members & Legis Assts; Republican House Members; Republican Leadership Support Staff; Republican Member Support Staff
Cc: Fricke, Erika; Spece, Gabe
Subject: Rep. Frankel -- Cosponsor Memo -- Reinstating the mandatory helmet law for motorcyclists

Please find the cosponsor memo below. Be advised there is ***No Hard Copy to Follow***

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

In the near future, I will re-introduce legislation to reinstate the Commonwealth's mandatory helmet law in order to save lives and lessen the burden of costs on our health care system.

Riding a motorcycle is an inherently dangerous activity, despite making up only 3% of riders, motorcycles account for 6% of all vehicle deaths and 12% of costs associated with accidents. In fact, motorcyclists are 37 times more likely to die in a crash than motor vehicle riders. One can minimize these risks by wearing a helmet when they ride. Studies have shown conclusively that wearing a helmet greatly reduces the risk of death or brain injury in the event of a crash. Sadly, Pennsylvania has seen a negative trend in helmet use since the 2003 repeal of the mandatory helmet law. Department of Transportation studies on states that have repealed their universal helmet laws show helmet use falling from nearly 100% to as low as 50% within two years of rescission.

This decline in helmet use among motorcyclists has a direct effect on the well-being of our citizens. The number of hospitalizations due to head injury increased by 78% and deaths associated with head injuries increased 66% since the state switched from a universal to partial helmet law. Studies show that we can save three times as many lives annually by returning to a universal helmet law. While education safety courses can be beneficial, simply taking a course doesn't mean these skills will carry over to actual practice. With the greater risk (and joy) of riding a motorcycle comes greater responsibility.

In addition to saving lives, reinstatement of Pennsylvania's mandatory helmet law will also save money. Medical care for traumatic brain injury is costly, the average cost per head injury is approximately \$47,000, and this figure does not include lifelong care which may be required. Often hospitals as well as private and public insurers provide uncompensated care for patients suffering head injuries. These costs are, in turn, absorbed by taxpayers and paid by consumers through increased insurance rates. It is estimated that nationally over \$2.9 billion was saved due to helmet use in 2008 alone. Had every rider been wearing a helmet, a further \$1.3 billion could have been saved. It seems unconscionable to not recognize the need, now more than ever, to reinstate the

mandatory helmet law for motorcyclists in an effort to control health care costs and, more importantly, save lives.

If you wish to co-sponsor this essential legislation please contact Carrie Goodyear in my office via e-mail (cgoodyea@pahouse.net) or telephone 717-705-1875.

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