

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

When It Comes To Laws, Motorcyclists Matter

One of this month's feature articles ("Closing The Generation Gap," page 36) discusses the importance of motorcycle advocacy and being involved in the political process. Too many motorcyclists take for granted the freedoms we all enjoy despite the gradual erosion of those freedoms at the hands of our elected officials and unelected bureaucrats.



By Rob Dingman

We are fortunate to live in a country with a representative democracy, but with that privilege comes responsibility. We all can influence decisions made by our government, but that requires vigilance and determination. This is particularly the case with personal interests that are not interests shared by all.

Motorcycling—and our passion for it—is an example of such an interest.

While the world would be a better place if everyone rode motorcycles, the fact is most citizens are not motorcyclists. Likewise, most people in our government are not motorcyclists.

As motorcyclists, we all know the adage, "If I have to explain motorcycling to you, you wouldn't understand." Most of our government officials, at every level of government, aren't motorcyclists and, therefore, don't understand motorcycling.

There are a handful of public office holders who ride, but many more would rather restrict our activities. Then there are the elected officials and unelected bureaucrats who regularly make significant decisions without even considering how those decisions might adversely affect motorcyclists.

A current example is the insistence of our government on flooding the

marketplace with fuels blended with increasingly higher levels of ethanol—such as E15—that are unsafe and illegal to use in motorcycles. The initiative started with the laudable goal of reducing our national dependence on foreign oil, but the adverse impact that misfueling with E15 would have on motorcycle engines and fuel systems doesn't seem to have been given any consideration at all.

Another emerging example has the potential to be even more detrimental to motorcycling. Every day you can read a new story on the internet about driverless cars, driverless corridors or driverless livery services. While this technology is intended to reduce crashes and fatalities, motorcycles are not being adequately considered as an integral part of the traffic mix as these technologies are developed. It is important to point out that there are a couple of auto manufacturers working on these technologies that also happen to manufacture motorcycles (BMW and Honda) and are considering motorcycles in the development of their innovations in this area, but they, too, are in the minority.

Protecting an interest or activity, or in the case of motorcycling, a lifestyle, requires association with other individuals who share your interests. "Special interests" is a term you hear a lot in an election year. One thing I learned in graduate school is that the difference between "interests" and "special interests" is that "special interests" are somebody else's interests. You could say that motorcycling, in the eyes of the general public, is a special interest and to them the AMA is a special interest group.

I often say that if the AMA didn't exist, it would have to be invented. There is not another organization on the planet that is involved in as many aspects of motorcycling as the AMA. The AMA exists to promote the motorcycle

lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling, and we pursue our mission on many fronts.

Special interest groups are often vilified for contributing to what is wrong with our government. In some cases, that vilification is justified. Special interest groups that have unlimited resources and use them in unethical ways to manipulate our government need to be called out.

But there are also groups, such as the AMA, that provide a source of information to our government officials that they otherwise wouldn't have. The AMA doesn't have the resources that many unscrupulous groups have. We don't have a Lear jet warming up on the tarmac ready to carry a hoard of lobbyists-for-hire into your state capital to solve your problem.

We do have a resource, however, that is much more valuable. A resource with high integrity. That resource is you!

The AMA's professional government relations staff working out of our offices in Washington, D.C., relies upon AMA members to not only be our eyes and ears, but to be foot soldiers in the AMA's grassroots army.

Motorcyclists are passionate advocates, and big-money organizations are envious of the resource we have in you. That is because the most effective way to influence elected officials is for them to hear from those who have the ability to put them out of office: the voters.

That is why it is so critical that you sign up for and respond to our AMA Action Alerts. The AMA is most effective when our collective voice is heard because you have responded to our calls for action.

If you are not signed up to get alerts, visit www.americanmotorcyclist.com and sign up today!

Rob Dingman is president and CEO of the AMA.

