

## GOVERNMENT INTRUSION

Quiet Efforts To Restrict Your Freedoms



By Rob Dingman

I've been involved in government and politics in one way or another for more than two decades, but I still shake my head over the ability of the federal government to reach—or overreach—into our lives, and the power wielded by bureaucrats to make that happen.

As a motorcyclist, you're probably aware of many examples, and three immediately come to mind for me, affecting street and off-highway riders. They involve ethanol in gasoline, which could damage motorcycle and all-terrain vehicle engines; the strict federal Wilderness

land-use designation that bars off-highway vehicle riding; and health insurance discrimination against riders.

Concerning ethanol, let me make our position clear. The AMA doesn't oppose ethanol in gasoline, but the AMA believes extensive testing needs to be done before E15—a new blend of gas coming on the market that is 15 percent ethanol—is approved for use in motorcycle and ATV engines.

The key for the AMA is that E15 must be proven safe for motorcycle and ATV engines. To the best of our knowledge, E15 isn't approved for use in any original-equipment motorcycles or ATVs. In fact, its use can void many manufacturers' warranties.

As of today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has only approved the use of E15 in model year 2001 and newer cars, light-duty trucks and medium-duty passenger vehicles.

In that case, how is the federal government going to prevent motorcyclists from inadvertently putting E15 in their gas tanks or gas cans when getting gas at a 'blender pump' with a single hose? (A blender pump dispenses different fuel blends through the same hose, so residual E15 could be left in a hose—some say as much as two-thirds of a gallon—when a motorcyclist fills up with another grade.)

Here's where the EPA is overreaching.

Under EPA rules, you must buy at least four gallons of gas from that pump. Not one gallon. Not two gallons. Not even three gallons.

Yes, the government is mandating you buy at least four gallons to dilute the residual E15 in the hose.

The simple solution, of course, is to use a different gas pump rather than a single-hose blender pump to get gas. What if that isn't an option? Then, I guess, you're hosed.

Regarding threats to off-highway riding, we're finding that the federal government apparently is once again trying to usurp congressional authority to create Wilderness through administrative fiat.



Wilderness is one of the strictest forms of public land management. Nearly all forms of non-pedestrian recreation are illegal in Wilderness areas, including OHV riding. The AMA wholeheartedly supports appropriate Wilderness, which is defined in the federal Wilderness Act of 1964. The key for the AMA is that the land must meet the strict criteria contained in the law, have public support and congressional approval.

Few Wilderness areas proposed today meet the essential criteria.

How is the federal government trying to keep you off your own public land without involving federal lawmakers? Simple.

U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar is trying to give bureaucrats in the federal Bureau of Land Management the power to manage public land as if Congress went through the public process to designate the land as Wilderness.

This is another example of the government reaching down into our lives without involving the people's representatives in Congress.

Concerning health insurance discrimination against motorcyclists and ATV riders, the AMA position is very clear: We oppose it, period.

We thought we had that battle won after working hard to pass a federal law to end that kind of discrimination.

In 1996, Congress passed the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) that included language prohibiting employers from denying health-care coverage based on a worker participating in legal activities such as motorcycle and ATV riding.

But when federal bureaucrats wrote rules to implement the law, they reversed the intent of Congress.

The AMA has recently received a flood of emails from employees of a Pittsburgh company that is adopting a new health plan next year that won't cover injuries sustained while riding a motorcycle.

This is an example of where federal bureaucrats have overreached, and the actions could be financially devastating to a motorcyclist who could get saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in medical bills.

We're fighting to protect your right to ride and race, serving as a watchdog on Congress, and government agencies and bureaucrats. And that goes for racing as well as transportation and recreation.

Of course, the more members we have, the more political clout we have. That's why I am asking you to bring a friend or family member into the AMA tent. Ask that rider to join the AMA to protect the future of riding. Or give an AMA membership as a gift.

Just go to [www.americanmotorcyclist.com](http://www.americanmotorcyclist.com) or call (800) AMA-JOIN (262-5646).

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