



ONE VOICE, MANY RESULTS

Surviving The Next ‘Meteor Strike’



By Rob Dingman

It’s clear to me that the repeal of the portion of the lead law (Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008) that threatened to end to sale of kids’ dirtbikes and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) was the result of the combined efforts of literally millions of riders.

Many organizations jumped into the battle. In addition to the AMA and All-Terrain Vehicle Association, our industry friends at the Motorcycle Industry Council and Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, MX Sports,

motocross parks, the enthusiast media and advocates such as AMA Motorcyclist of the Year Nancy Sabater worked tirelessly behind the scenes and on the front lines to fix this misguided law.

Most importantly, we succeeded because millions of riders closed ranks and voiced their opinion to their legislators that denying kids the opportunity to ride was unjust, and threatened to destroy a lifestyle and an industry that is rooted in the very freedoms upon which our country was founded.

Make no mistake. If the lead law was not changed, the future of riding any kind of motorcycle—on-road or off-road, two-wheeled or three-wheeled—and ATV was in serious jeopardy. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out that when youngsters are denied the opportunity to ride, fewer and fewer of them will take up riding when they become adults. Our numbers would rapidly dwindle over time.

What did we learn from this experience?

AMA Board of Directors Chairman Stan Simpson has often used the analogy that meteor strikes can happen in our industry, and we have to be prepared for them. It’s fair to say that through sheer willpower and perseverance we prevailed this time. We need to work together and cohesively to fend off this kind of threat.

Between the interests of our industry and our riders—not to mention the many factions of riders—we often follow different, and sometimes competing agendas, to the detriment of the whole. When we set aside our differences and work as one,

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there’s no telling what we can accomplish.

It’s the hope that’s present in that last point that gives me great optimism for the future.

True, there will be times when we disagree on means and ends. But we desperately need to set aside our differences and develop strategies and plans to counter major threats to our sport and lifestyle. This is not just a good idea. It’s actually happening—now—at the grassroots level.

In one of our feature stories this month, we sat down with five members of ABATE of Indiana to bring you the story of how the partnership between Indiana’s street and dirt riders came about, and how they are tackling the big issues facing riders in their state. As a combined force, there’s a lot we can learn from ABATE of Indiana Executive Director Jay Jackson and Operations Director Gary Williams, Roy Garrett and Al Pivonka, who were formerly with Discover Indiana Riding Trails, and street and dirt rider Dave “Frosty” Frost.

Finally, I want to compliment our industry and aftermarket friends for their investment and hard work to sustain motorcycling and ATV riding in the United States. If this experience has taught us anything, it’s that the outside world is largely indifferent to our riding world, and when they look at us, it is through one lens. The industry cannot survive without riders’ purchases, any more than riders can survive without the products our industry produces. The motorcycling community needs the industry and rider groups to be strong, healthy and independent, yet willing to collaborate on shared goals.

We hope that we don’t see another meteor strike against motorcycling any time soon, but I can assure you that our motorcycling universe is littered with meteors.

Closing ranks to prepare for the challenge and acting with one purpose is our best defense.

Rob Dingman is president and CEO of the American Motorcyclist Association.