

# Sitting On The Sidelines Is Not An Option

By Rob Dingman

As I reflect on the unprecedented attacks on motorcycling in 2009, and the enormity of the challenges ahead, I have reached an inescapable conclusion: No longer can any motorcyclist afford to sit on the sidelines.

The days are gone when we can page through bike reviews, get recommendations from friends, buy a used or new motorcycle, and just go riding. Not if we expect to do so in five, 10 or 20 years.

If this sounds like “Chicken Little” thinking, let me awaken you from this simple children’s story. Enjoy riding off-road on public land? Last year, we lost 2 million acres to inappropriate federal Wilderness designations, and there are many more millions of acres being targeted in Congress right now. OK, you tell yourself, I can always go riding at my local MX track. Not so fast—every week we learn of MX tracks in urban areas under threat of closure due to noise complaints.

Think street riding is immune to restriction? The same excessive sound complaints that threaten tracks are causing cities large and small to target street motorcyclists with unfair ordinances and laws, while allowing other loud noise emitters to remain unchecked. Street riding is also under attack from safetycrats who point to the increase in motorcycle crashes and fatalities on our highways and demand action, especially when automobile fatalities are at historic lows. The AMA opposes straight pipes; strongly advocates the voluntary use of protective gear, including helmets certified by the manufacturer to meet the DOT standard; and welcomes the expanded availability of anti-lock braking. But are you ready for mandated OE-exhausts, inflatable riding suits, airbags and roll cages?

Impossible, you say? All it takes is a stroke of the pen.

That’s what happened last year when President Obama signed into law the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Battlefield Protection Act, which validated the biggest Congressional land grab in modern history by designating more than 2 million acres as federally protected Wilderness—the majority of which didn’t meet the original Congressional definition of Wilderness—with virtually no public debate or scrutiny. Or in 2008, when then-President Bush signed into law the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA). Six months later, the lead-content provisions of the CPSIA resulted in the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s ban on the sale of youth-model dirtbikes and ATVs, forcing families to choose adult-sized machines for their kids—putting them at great risk—and devastating a segment of the motorsports community, already reeling from a major recession.



We no longer have the luxury of tearing down organizations like the AMA that are trying to save motorcycling. It’s time to stop blaming those who don’t ride your kind of bike, or hang with your crowd, or share your political beliefs, and recognize that anyone in power who does not ride a motorcycle cares little about the future of motorcycling in any form. If we expect to preserve our sport and our lifestyle for our and future generations, we must close ranks like there’s no tomorrow.

How? If you’re reading this, as an AMA member, you’re already part of the solution. But there are not nearly enough of us to withstand these multi-pronged attacks. Many AMA members like to think we are the National Rifle Association (NRA) of the motorcycling world, yet we only have 245,000 members out of 20 million estimated riders. The NRA has more than 4 million members, not to mention a Constitutional amendment that protects their rights. There is no Constitutional right to ride a motorcycle. It’s a hard-earned privilege that we must step up and defend.

The bottom line: Each of us has to recruit more members for the AMA army. We all have friends who ride but are not members. Persuade them to join. Also, only buy from motorcycle businesses that support the AMA. Tell those that don’t that they risk losing your business.

Now is the time to join forces and stand shoulder-to-shoulder on the front lines.

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