

UNITED WE RIDE



DIVIDED WE DRIVE



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POSITION STATEMENT

FREEDOM

Support of HB 700 - Reedy/SB 925 – Roberts.

HB 700 and SB 925 would amend Tennessee's helmet law to allow adults age 21 and older to choose whether or not to wear a helmet while riding on a motorcycle as either an operator or passenger. Most states already allow adults to make that choice. While you will no doubt hear many in opposition to this bill cite conclusions with no factual basis, the motorcyclists of Tennessee ask you consider the following facts concerning this bill.

- 1) **Thirty-One states currently allow adult motorcycle riders to choose whether or not to wear a helmet.** Tennessee is only one of 19 that do not. **HB 700/SB925** merely brings Tennessee in line with the majority of the United States.
- 2) States which have repealed their mandatory helmet laws have seen **increased revenues** in motorcycle sales, registrations and tourism. Three bordering states of Tennessee enjoy freedom of choice for adults: Arkansas, Kentucky, and South Carolina. Each of these states has huge tourism events that draw hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina do NOT have freedom of choice for adults, and they do not enjoy the tourism boost of huge annual motorcycling events. Tennessee would likely see increased tourism due to riders from those neighboring states coming to Tennessee, much in the same way that many riders in Tennessee currently go to Arkansas, Kentucky, and South Carolina to spend their vacation dollars, due to the fact that they allow adults to make their own choice about motorcycle helmets.
- 3) States which allow adults to choose whether or not to wear a motorcycle helmet do not see higher **motorcycle fatality rates**. According to data from the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA), between 2008 and 2011, jurisdictions with mandatory motorcycle helmet laws averaged 60.26 motorcycle related fatalities per 100,000 registered motorcycles while jurisdictions which allowed adults to choose whether or not to wear a helmet averaged 57.90 motorcycle related fatalities per 100,000 registered motorcycles.
- 4) States which allow adults to choose whether or not to wear a motorcycle helmet do not see higher motor **vehicle insurance rates**. Insure.com recently released its report on motor vehicle insurance rates for 2014, which looks at average motor vehicle insurance rates for each state. The average motor vehicle insurance rate in states which had mandatory motorcycle helmet laws was \$1,582.45. The average motor vehicle insurance rate in states which allowed adult riders to choose whether or not to wear a motorcycle helmet was \$1,451.45.
- 5) States which allow adults to choose whether or not to wear a motorcycle helmet do not experience increased **health insurance premiums**. The most recent report on the subject of average monthly individual health care premiums by the Kaiser Family Foundation looked at average monthly individual health care premiums by state for the year 2013. The average monthly individual health care premium in states which had mandatory motorcycle helmet laws was \$267.53. The average monthly individual health care premium in states which allowed adult riders to choose whether or not to wear a motorcycle helmet was \$245.26.

This issue is a matter of choice and personal freedom. If one has a governmental philosophy that individuals should make their own decisions absent a compelling governmental interest, then one would strongly support **HB 700/SB 925**. Thank you for your time and consideration on this important matter to motorcyclists. Details and history of the bill: www.capitol.tn.gov.

UPDATE 05/22/2015: The bill has passed through House Sub Transportation and Full Transportation as well as Senate Transportation Committees. The strategy is to work for passage through Finance Committees, Floor Votes, and the Governor's approval during 2016. You can help!