

# *Bruce on Bikers' Rights*

© Copyright 2007 Bruce Arnold (Bruce@LdrLongDistanceRider.com)

July 2007

## **Why All Motorcyclists Should Be AMA Members** *Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due*



The March 2007 installment of *Bruce on Bikers' Rights* was an open letter to Rob Dingman, President and CEO of the American Motorcyclist Association (“AMA”):

<http://tinyurl.com/2dnsbr>

In that letter, I challenged for a list of reasons whether the AMA’s “*rights. riding. racing.*” tagline truly reflected the mission and priorities of our nation’s largest motorcyclists’ rights organization (“MRO”). Part of that challenge was conveyed by this question:

*“Why is it that every time a state legislative hearing on [motorcycling issues] is conducted... lobbyists from the American Automobile Association (“AAA”) are almost always present, while the AMA remains conspicuous in its absence?”*

Rob never gave me an answer to that question, but subsequent events have certainly suggested one. In one recent instance, I specifically asked the heads of two rival state motorcyclists’ rights organizations (“SMROs”) whether the AMA had offered them assistance or support. The written answers I received said “No”, but subsequent conversations with the individuals involved strongly suggested otherwise. I have no hard evidence I can share here, but my belief is now that the AMA’s absence from state legislative hearings on motorcycling issues is most likely due to SMROs either (a) not inviting the AMA’s participation, or (b) declining the AMA’s offers of support. Either way, from now on I suggest that when the question “*Where is the AMA?*” comes up, it should be posed first to our SMRO leaders.

While it is clearly politically correct for a national MRO to defer to SMROs on state-level concerns, the line separating national- from state-level motorcycling issues is anything but clear. Do not state motorcycling laws usually impact all riders traveling through that state, regardless of their residence? And what if those laws are, as my partner “**Madd Ray**” Henke contends, from the federal perspective unconstitutional?

<http://tinyurl.com/yu7sa6>

Also, are not the major proponents behind most state-level motorcycle legislation actually national organizations (like the AAA, NHTSA, the healthcare and insurance lobbies, etc.)? And if more of a state’s motorcyclists belong to the AMA than the SMRO, then which organization has the more legitimate mandate?

**HANG UP AND DRIVE** initiatives to ban cell phone conversations while driving is another political arena where the goal is clear, but who's got the football is questionable. Laudable efforts by some...

<http://tinyurl.com/yqe8dk>

...have even been countermanded by others...

<http://tinyurl.com/yqrxm6>

...so there is clearly a question as to who has "the balls to ban the calls":

<http://tinyurl.com/2pctn9>

Are cell phone bans truly a "biker" issue? And if so, at what level should they be addressed? National, state or local? As Madd Ray and I pointed out in our October 2006 letter to the AMA, the Motorcycle Riders Foundation ("MRF") and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation ("MSF")...

<http://tinyurl.com/2dmcs5>

...the injuries and deaths resulting from accidents caused by cell phone conversation-impaired drivers pose a clear and present danger to all who share the road, but none more so than motorcyclists. And although they have not yet aggressively championed this cause, at least on page 44 of the June 2007 issue of **American Motorcyclist** magazine, the AMA tops their list of the "8 Worst Things Ever to Happen to Motorcycling" with the following:

**"Cellphones** *Somebody else's* cellphone—the one being used by the driver swerving between lanes in front of you."

Printing that one line is not exactly storming the Bastille, but at least the AMA is spreading awareness, and hopefully building consensus.

**THE REAL GEM** in the June 2007 issue of **American Motorcyclist**, however, is the AMA's "Who's Watching You?" article that begins on the next page. Here is the lead-in:

*"You're out for a Sunday ride with your friends, cruising out of town to enjoy your favorite twisties." On the way back, you jump onto the freeway, where you pass under a metal canopy holding a row of sensors. The sensors download data from a GPS unit installed as standard equipment on your bike. A couple of days later, a traffic ticket arrives at your home. The notation on it indicates that somewhere out there on those back roads, you exceeded the speed limit briefly. You can mail in your fine, or you can go to court and try to prove that you didn't do what your own bike says you did. ... You stop at a gas station to fill up, and a display on the pump indicates that it's identified your motorcycle. The pump reads your bike's onboard computer and then adjusts the price of the gas based on your road-usage patterns. ... You pull a*

*stack of letters out of the mailbox and notice an envelope from your insurance company. Inside is a bill that includes a hefty surcharge. Why? The helpful note underneath explains that the insurance company has determined you're spending much of your time on congested roads where the chances of being in an accident are higher. As a result, your insurance rate just went up. ... Far-fetched? Hardly. The technology to do all that—and a lot more—already exists.”*

This well-written article explains in plain English the present and potential *Big Brother* applications for event data recorder (“**EDR**”), global positioning system (“**GPS**”), intelligent speed adaptation (“**ISA**”) and radio frequency identification (“**RFID**”) technologies. It also dovetails well with my recent discussions of Intelligent Transport and Highway Automation...

<http://tinyurl.com/3dsff2>

...and reinforces my concerns that motorcyclists everywhere need to start worrying less about being *Wild Hogs* and more about becoming *Boiled Frogs*:

<http://tinyurl.com/2g6o75>

**IF YOU ARE AN AMA MEMBER**, you can login and read “Who’s Watching You?” here:

<http://tinyurl.com/2c3br>

If you are not, then you can become a member in minutes by going here:

<http://ama-cycle.org/>

Membership in the American Motorcyclist Association is only \$39.00 a year, including among many other benefits an annual subscription to **American Motorcyclist** magazine. And no matter where you are (geographically *or* politically) ... or what or how you ride ... I am confident that somewhere in those twelve issues you’ll find more than enough value to justify that investment.

Until Next Time ... Ride Long, Ride Free!

Bruce Arnold