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Reading Article G1

Article #16: Motorcycle Helmet Law

This November, I encourage the people of Arkansas to vote NO on a referendum to repeal the state's motorcycle helmet law. The state's current helmet law saves hundreds of lives per year, and it is senseless that people should be injured or killed merely because they are too vain to wear a helmet. Furthermore, helmet laws help to reduce public expenditures on health care and have even been shown to deter motorcycle theft. For these reasons, the citizens of Arkansas must oppose this referendum.

One hardly needs to appeal to statistics to show that helmets protect motorcyclists against injury or death. For those who are skeptical, however, the National Highway

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decision, but this is not the case. A 2002 study by the NHTSA concluded that only about half of all injured motorcyclists were properly insured, which means many of these riders likely relied on public funds to subsidize their healthcare costs. If the citizens of Arkansas choose to repeal the helmet law, we can expect these costs to rise significantly, and at a time when our state is in a financial crisis.

Helmet laws can also help reduce motorcycle theft. Few thieves think to bring a helmet with them when they steal a motorcycle, which makes them much easier for police to spot. In addition to making it easier to apprehend motorcycle thieves and recover stolen bikes, evidence shows that helmet laws can deter motorcycle theft from happening in the first place. After Texas enacted a statewide helmet law, cities there saw rates of motorcycle theft drop by up to 44%. A drop in the rates of motorcycle theft directly reduces law enforcement expenses related to this crime, which is another benefit to all citizens.

Opponents of the helmet law offer two main arguments. First, the law's detractors argue that properly educating riders is the best way to avoid accidents. I agree entirely; all motorcycle riders should be properly educated and should ride their bikes responsibly. Some accidents, however, are unavoidable, and as I have argued, helmets significantly reduce health care expenditures associated with all accidents. Second, opponents argue that helmet laws infringe on their personal freedom. Again, I agree that the government should avoid constraining individual choice whenever possible, but as I have shown, the decision to wear a helmet does not affect only the rider, so this issue is not a simple matter of individual liberty. The government must not allow a few individuals to make society bear the burden of their irresponsible choices.

In a perfect world, helmet laws would not be necessary because all riders would wear them voluntarily. However, we do not live in a perfect world. Therefore we must require motorcyclists to make this socially responsible decision. As I have argued, helmet laws not only benefit motorcyclists, but all citizens. Please join me this November in voting NO

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