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## I AM NOT A PUBLIC BURDEN

With the Roadway Users Responsibility Act being signed by the governor in late May, it's about time to kick back, relax, and enjoy the summer. Unless, something happens to bring national attention to bikers that prefer not to wear a helmet. Back to work! Early this month I was fielding calls from reporters that wanted to address concerns about motorcycles being able to run red lights, and then the crap hit the fan. There were 2,373 motorcycle crashes last year in the state with over 40% of them being right-of-way violations, but it takes one NFL quarterback injured in a preventable accident to make headlines. What's the problem with right-of-way violations finally getting the attention they deserve? Nothing, because that's what they got. Every media outlet wanted to report on nothing but the fact that he wasn't wearing a helmet. Which by the way is legal in the state of Pennsylvania. I've fielded calls from at least a dozen TV and radio stations throughout the state, but it seems many aren't aware that a viable motorcycle rights organization exists that would be glad to comment on their skewed statistics. I've driven myself crazy listening to talk show after talk show with non-bikers calling in to say how their sick and tired of non-helmet wearing bikers driving up their insurance rates and causing carnage on our roads. I've heard every stupid half truth ever told about bikers in the last month, and although I know I'm preaching to the choir here, I'm going to set the record straight, I am not a public burden.

I don't expect anyone to field questions from reporters as a representative of ABATE of Wisconsin Inc, that's my job. But, I do expect everyone to stand up for their rights and freedoms to ride as they choose. And let everyone know that we will not accept, and will defeat, any legislation that seeks to take away our freedoms. We aren't anti-helmet, we're anti-helmet law. Everyone has a different reason for wearing, or not wearing a helmet. I'd like to share my views with you, and please use the information to strengthen your own opinions. We need to stand up with a strong, united voice if we want to stop the foolish rant that we are now experiencing.

First off, I'd like to get the only sticky point of our Roadway Users Responsibility Act out of the way. Being able to run through a red light seems to be what every cager is going to complain about. It's a lot of griping over nothing. The red light running portion of this bill is very simple and straight forward common sense. When a traffic signal does not acknowledge your bikes existence, you no longer have to wait for a cage to come along and turn it green. After waiting 45 seconds, you will be able to proceed through the signal, treating it as a two-way stop sign. Cross traffic still has the right

of way, and you should always use your best discretion for the safety of both rider and passenger. This was much needed and I look forward to using this new law after October.

Next, the Ben Roethlisberger incident. Pennsylvania repealed their helmet law a couple years ago, and I've enjoyed riding through the mountains helmet free on several occasions. Ben was driving his Suzuki Hyabusa near Pittsburg when a 62 year old lady decided looking twice wasn't an option and turned left in front of him. Since he was not wearing a helmet, he received facial injuries as he was ejected over her car. If he'd been wearing a helmet (probably full face as per most crotch rocket riders) he might not have sustained any injuries in this accident. Or, he might have received a cervical spine injury that would have paralyzed him for life. If he'd been wearing the helmet of choice for most cruiser bike riders and motor patrol officers, he'd more than likely have received the identical injuries that he received wearing nothing at all. There are many ways to look at this, and nobody can really say what could have happened. Because facts are facts. But, the one fact that everyone in the media, and all those that follow the news as completely accurate and unbiased, is the fact that he did not crash on his own. He could have driven down the road naked and received no injuries if the woman that pulled in front of him had taken the time to look twice. It's about time that people start putting blame where it belongs.

Now, because of the Roethlisberger incident, every media outlet across the nation has put their opinions on helmet laws out there. In Milwaukee, where I get most of my news, several radio stations have been quite fair. I called in to a morning show and although I was cut short, the host ultimately stated what we believe. That if you are going to legislate us to wear helmets, what's next? Are we going to have to wear body armor and have our bikes equipped with air bags? ABATE member Jonathan Green did a fine job of educating the public in a segment on his radio program and then gave me a copy of the segment to archive for future use and educational purposes. Many callers to these programs spit out ridiculous statements with unrelenting angst towards bikers. All our bikes should be painted safety orange and we should have jackets and helmets to match because without the proper safety gear, bikers are driving up everyone's insurance rates and burdening society when the lay in the hospital and the state picks up the tab for all of it. Oh, and don't let me

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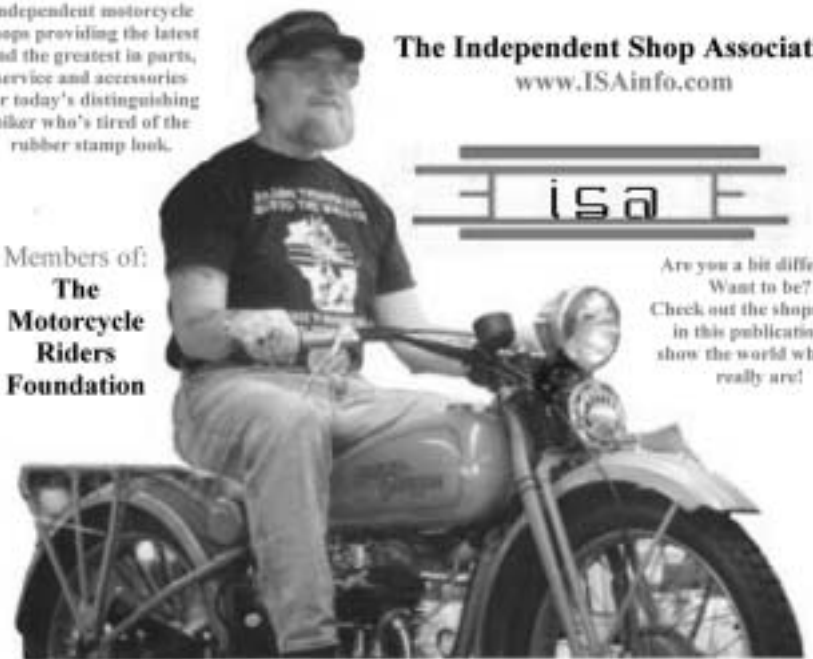
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