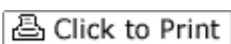




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Bikers Rally for Justice

More than 200 motorcyclists rode their bikes onto the grounds of the Florida Capitol, seeking tougher penalties for motorists who hit and kill bikers.

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Their looks are deceiving. These are doctors, engineers, Vietnam veterans. They belong to a group known as ABATE. It started out as A Brotherhood Against Totalitarian Enactments and ended up American Bikers Aimed towards Education.

They were here to push the latter. This sign says it all. They want tougher penalties for everyone involved in a fatal accident. Often they say motorists get a slap on the wrist and a civil citation for running a red light, but nothing more.

Tina McElhenny lost her son in 2002.

“We had to fight for 6 months just for her to receive a ticket,” McElhenny said. “And then it was dismissed because he was the only witness and unfortunately he was killed, by her.”

In Florida, bikers die on the road at an average of more than one a day.

It took more than ten minutes to read the names of all of the bikers killed last year. A bell sounding for each one of them.

In addition to tougher penalties, they also want everyone involved in fatal accidents to have their blood alcohol level tested. Even some lawmakers were surprised to learn that’s not already the law.


“If that careless driver kills someone, then that driver could go to jail,” Sen. Dave Aronberg (D-Greenacres) said. “Right now, it’s like a slap on the wrist.”

The group, which is highly organized, has a track record of winning more than they lose.

The tougher penalties would also apply to drivers who hit pedestrians and bicyclists. Despite their anger, the bikers are not backing legislation to allow red light cameras. They fear they will be unable to see a light changing when they follow vehicles through intersections.

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