

# PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM THE AMERICAN MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION:



## Protect Motorcycle Safety Grants and Fight Helmet Mandates with One Call

Call Your Senator on the Committee Immediately

[Take Action!](#)

On Wednesday, December 14, the [Senate Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee](#) will mark-up the "Motor Vehicle and Highway Safety Improvement Act of 2011," ([S. 1449](#)). The measure covers the safety aspects of the next national transportation program, including the acceptable activities of the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA). S. 1449 contains three areas of critical concern to motorcyclists.

The first is [Lautenberg Amendment #1](#) filed on the morning of Monday, December 12. [Senator Frank Lautenberg's \(D-NJ\)](#) amendment would drastically alter the motorcyclist safety grant program, indirectly force states to pass mandatory universal helmet laws, and direct the use of federal tax dollars to only promote the use of helmets.

More specifically, the amendment alters the current motorcyclist safety grant program (a.k.a. Section 2010 funds) by loosening the requirements to receive funds for states with mandatory universal helmet laws in place. A mandatory universal helmet law requires any rider and passenger on a motorcycle to be wearing a helmet at all times, regardless of age. The AMA believes that adults should have the right to voluntarily decide when to wear a helmet.

States that currently do not have universal helmet laws would see their qualification criteria become stricter in order to receive safety grants.

Additionally, states without mandatory universal helmet laws would be

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required to spend 50% of their grant funds on the promotion of helmet use. The remaining 50% could be spent on rider training, helmet promotion, enforcement programs to reduce impaired riding, linking motorcycle data together electronically in states, implementation of graduating licensing systems for riders, and speeding and reckless riding enforcement programs.

The revised use of funds is contradictory to the spirit in which motorcyclists fought for the safety grant program during the last federal transportation initiative. In 2005, the motorcycling community came together to create the motorcyclist safety grant program to encourage states to fund motorcycle safety awareness, education, and training programs. The allowable uses of funds included public service announcements, motorist awareness campaigns, and the improved delivery of rider training.

Lautenberg Amendment #1 would provide zero funding for awareness and education programs.

The second threat to motorcyclists is a clause that would lift the ban on NHTSA being able to use federal tax dollars to lobby states to pass mandatory helmet laws. The provision was included in the national transportation program beginning in 1998 and was re-affirmed in 2005. The AMA believes that the decision on helmet laws is the right of each individual states and the federal government should not be allowed to apply unfair pressure to influence a state's choice on that issue.

[Senator Jim DeMint \(R-SC\)](#) has introduced one amendment to strike the clause lifting the ban on NHTSA lobbying efforts. Additionally, DeMint has offered an amendment that would further address lobbying efforts by the federal government. Both DeMint Amendments #1 and #18 should pass in order to bar the federal government from using individual tax-payer dollars to control the state law-making process.

Thirdly, S. 1449 seeks to alter the definition of "motor vehicle equipment" to specifically call-out motorcycle helmets. This is a tactic used to quietly suggest states spend federal funding related to any type of motor vehicle equipment on motorcycle helmets. Senator DeMint has also offered DeMint Amendment #2 to strike the reference to motorcycle helmets in this definition.

If one of your Senators is on the Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee, then that Senator can help address these issues immediately. Due to the short amount of time available, the best way to contact your Senator is to call. Click on the "Call Now" option, enter your zip code and receive all the information you need, including pre-written talking points to deliver to your Senator on the Committee.

Call your Senator on the Committee now and tell them to: 1) Vote "No" on Lautenberg Amendment #1 to S. 1449 that would change the motorcyclist safety grant program; 2) Support the DeMint Amendments #1 & #18 to S. 1449 that would address lobbying by the federal government; 3) Strike "motorcycle helmet" from the definition of "motor vehicle equipment."

Call now; there is no time to waste

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