

## Press Release



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**FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE:**

### **ABATE of Florida Convinces the Nation's Oldest City to Allow Motorcycles**

St. Augustine, FL, January 14, 2010 — Many have said that the City of St. Augustine Florida is a beautiful and historic place to visit and live. Since 1565, over 400 years ago, the city has been extending a welcome hand to all that visit and make this city their home. In 2005 the city built a parking garage downtown so residents and visitors had an available parking area to safely park their vehicles.

Unless you were riding a motorcycle that is. Motorcycles were not welcome. A large, bright, reflective yellow "NO MOTORCYCLES" sign was prominently installed at the entrance. If you rode into town on any motorcycle or scooter, you were banned from safely parking in this \$20 million taxpayer-funded garage. Definitely not a "Welcome" feeling.

The issue at hand, according to St. Augustine's City Manager, Bill Harriss, is the gates that allow access/egress. He stated in an interview with *The St. Augustine Record* that the engineers who designed the garage's entryways advised against it. Many options were offered over the years to reverse this decision, but the momentum for the change in policy came when ABATE of Florida's Vintage Chapter began this fight in earnest back in November 2009.

After speaking at the St. Augustine December 14, 2009 City Commissioners' Meeting, ABATE of Florida Vintage Chapter's Public Relation Trustee, J.D. Long, found that two of the City Commissioners agreed with ABATE of Florida, feeling that the publicly-funded garage should be allowing motorcycles in. There were two more Commissioners and the Mayor that still needed convincing. Although Harriss is a motorcyclist himself, his position does not hold a binding vote with the Commission.

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Many felt modifying the existing gates were the least expensive and seemed to be the most logical method to correct the discrimination. The additional revenue from the motorcycles would pay off the modifications in short time, and then help the city by providing new income.

The problem at hand was accurately summed up by Long; "If they can't use common sense, then we have to use the law". ABATE of Florida, Inc.'s Legal Council, Larry Crow of Tampa, was already preparing a case should the City Commissioners vote to continue the ban.

On January 11, 2010, members from ABATE of Florida's Vintage, Duval County, Black Creek & Putnam County Chapters, as well as members of other motorcycle organizations, filled the St. Augustine City Commissioner's meeting chamber to show their discontent with the four-year-old discriminatory ban on motorcycles.

Thanks to the dedication of the ABATE of Florida members for calling this problem to light, and then following through by standing up and fighting to stop the discrimination against bikers. The St. Augustine City Commissioners voted unanimously in favor of removing the ban and establishing a dedicated entrance to the garage and a shortened gate at the existing manned exit so that motorcyclists may now park their bikes safely in downtown St. Augustine. Chief Operations Officer John Regan suggested in *The St. Augustine Report* that the city's advertising should now begin promoting St. Augustine as being a motorcycle-friendly city.

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With almost 8,000 members, ABATE of Florida, Inc. is Florida's largest Motorcyclists' Rights Organization, and the fourth largest nationwide. Our missions include educating the public about motorcycle awareness and continuing to fight in Tallahassee for the rights of every motorcyclist and the public in general. To aid in these ends, we have a lobbyist on staff and have founded the Motorcycle Safety and Awareness Program, both with the intentions to help make the roads safer for everyone. ABATE of Florida members vote in every election, and strive to teach the public to be conscious of other drivers & riders while operating motor vehicles in the sunshine state.

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