

SKILLED MOTORCYCLIST ASSOCIATION—RESPONSIBLE, TRAINED AND EDUCATED RIDERS, INC.
(SMARTER @ www.smarter-usa.org | e-mail info@smarter-usa.org · smarterusa@gmail.com)
P.O. Box 121, Scottville, MI 49454-0121

Dan Petterson, Ed.D., President/CEO · Call/Fax (231) 845-9589

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 10, 2013

Contact: Dan Petterson, Ed.D.
(231) 845-9589

ONE YEAR POST REPEAL: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Scottville, MI – The Skilled Motorcyclist Association—Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc. (SMARTER) is a motorcyclist association that recognizes all-rider helmet laws are a vital component of a comprehensive motorcyclist-safety program.

Christopher A. Hart, vice chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, has noted that helmet-law repeals amount to a vast experiment affirming the effectiveness of such laws in reducing motorcyclist deaths and injuries. On Friday the 13th of April, 2012, Michigan enlisted itself in that tragic human experiment. What a terrible mistake our Legislature and governor made. As expected, the repeal of our helmet law has turned out to be a disaster that has cost human lives and has caused needless suffering.

While it is true that you never get a second chance to make a first impression, when you make an error in judgment not costing you your own life, you do get a chance to admit you made a mistake and you get an opportunity to learn from it and make amends. That is the chance available now to our state Legislature and our governor. They have a chance to take a mulligan, an opportunity for a do-over.

The early evidence we have now is consistent with the predictions members of the Heads First Coalition made that the number of deaths and injuries would increase following repeal of our all-rider helmet law. Fifty-five helmetless riders died and 195 suffered incapacitating injuries. Research by the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute tells us that had all these riders been wearing a helmet, 26 would still be alive and 49 would not have suffered such serious injuries.

While we can't turn back the clock to save the lives lost or irrevocably altered as a tragic consequence of this costly mistake, we can reinstate the helmet law now, just one year after repeal, and confidently look to the future knowing that the single-most important aspect of a comprehensive motorcyclist-safety program has been restored: *the mandatory helmet law that served this state well for over four decades.*

Motorcyclists should take responsibility for their own safety; but the sad fact is, sometimes they do not, and that is why a mandatory, universal helmet law is so important. To compensate for riders of motorcycles who shirk their responsibility—to society, their families, themselves—our lawmakers must exercise their “response ability,” their ability to respond to the Michigan-specific data now available. There is no shame in correcting your course; the shame is in continuing in a direction proven to be dead wrong.

The time for action to reinstate our lifesaving and dollar-saving all-rider helmet law is now. Polls have shown that the majority of Michigan voters support an all-rider helmet law. Elected officials who, with honesty and sincerity, admit their mistake and rescind their support for repeal will earn the respect of those voters. And our new legislators, who had no say in this costly experiment, joined by their colleagues who have diligently opposed repeal all along, will have an opportunity to carry out the will of the majority by enacting this common-sense measure that helps keep motorcyclists safe.

The dead and injured motorcyclists who chose to ride without a helmet don't get a do-over. Our lawmakers are fortunate that they do. The riding season is upon us. How many more lives need we sacrifice?

Lawmakers, the time has come for you to cry, "Mulligan!"

###

The Skilled Motorcyclist Association—Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc. (SMARTER) is dedicated to enhancing motorcyclist safety by educating riders and the public for the advancement of responsible riding.