

Motorcycle Helmet Use Should Not be Optional

Federal Lawmakers move to prevent Washington DC from enforcing the current DC all-rider motorcycle helmet use requirement is one more step in the wrong direction for motorcyclist safety

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Introduction

Two Republican lawmakers (Rep. Derrick Van Orden [Wis.] and Sen. Tim Sheehy [Mont.] introduced the bills H.R. 10067 and S. 5274) on August 6, 2026 to overturn Washington, DC's all rider motorcycle helmet use requirement (universal motorcycle helmet mandate). The proposed federal legislation aims to bar the District from requiring protective helmets for riders and operators 18 and older.

Background

In 1967, the federal government required states to enact universal motorcycle helmet laws to qualify for certain highway safety funds. By 1975, all but three had complied. In 1976, Congress revoked federal authority to assess penalties for noncompliance, and states began to weaken helmet laws to apply only to young or novice riders. Over time, approximately 30 states have taken a big step in the wrong direction by weakening their motorcycle helmet use requirements.

Currently, fewer than 20 states and territories have an all-rider motorcycle helmet use requirement. These introduced bills, if passed, could put DC in the group with jurisdictions that have chosen to sacrifice lives, disabilities and dollars in the name of "freedom."

The Skilled Motorcyclist Association – Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders, Inc. (SMARTER) believes motorcycle riders, motorcyclist safety advocates and policy decision makers make better decisions when the decisions are based on factual knowledge and the conclusions of quality research. Our mission, therefore, is to gather, examine, catalogue, share, post and distribute motorcyclist safety factual information and research and to advocate for the use of such knowledge as the basis of decisions.

Research regarding motorcycle helmet use and motorcycle helmet use requirements is here:

[Helmets & Laws | Skilled Motorcyclist Association](#)

A brochure summarizing the importance of helmet use requirements as a vital part of a comprehensive motorcyclist safety program is here:

<https://smarter-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Without-Helmets-Brochure.pdf>

All-rider motorcyclist helmet use requirements are the only countermeasure determined to be effective in saving motorcyclists' lives. The conclusions are consistent across several high-quality evaluations with similar results.

The most effective strategy to increase helmet use is enactment of all-rider motorcyclist helmet requirements. **SMARTER supports the enactment of all-rider motorcyclist helmet use requirements and opposes the repeal or weakening of existing all-rider motorcyclist helmet use laws.**

What's Next

Both of these bills have been officially referred to congressional committees. Because the legislation was only recently introduced, no final results, votes, or policy changes have occurred yet.

House Bill (H.R. 10067) has been referred to the [House Committee on Oversight and Accountability](#) (formerly Oversight and Government Reform), which oversees District of Columbia affairs. Senate Bill (S. 5274) has been referred to the [Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs](#), which holds jurisdiction over the governance of the nation's capital. The committees must debate, amend, or vote on the bills before they can advance to the full House or Senate floors for a vote.