

HB 155 -- MOTORCYCLE HELMETS

SPONSOR: Dusenberg

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Homeland Security by a vote of 7 to 0.

This bill requires only persons younger than 21 years of age to wear protective headgear when operating or riding as a passenger on any motorcycle or motortricycle. Currently, all motorcyclists are required to wear protective headgear.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill is an issue of freedom and the right of adults to make their own choices.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Dusenberg; Freedom of Road Riders; ABATE for Missouri; American Motorcyclist Association; Motorcycle Riders Foundation; and Ann P. Jones.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that head injury is the leading cause of death in motorcycle accidents. While appropriate protective headgear does not prevent every head injury, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that helmets are 67% effective in preventing brain injuries and 34% effective in preventing fatalities in motorcycle accidents. It has been proven that helmet laws translate into increased helmet usage which in turn saves lives and reduces head trauma.

Testifying against the bill were Highway Safety Division, Department of Transportation; Missouri State Medical Association; Missouri Hospital Association; Property Casualty Insurers Association of America; Eastern Missouri Psychiatric Society; Missouri Motorcycle Safety Program, Missouri Safety Center; Missouri Safety Council; and Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety.