

HB 588 -- MOTORCYCLE HELMETS

SPONSOR: Kelley (127)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 9 to 2.

This bill makes it unlawful for a law enforcement agent to stop, inspect, or detain a motorcyclist to solely enforce the requirement that he or she be wearing a helmet.

This bill is similar to HB 1657 (2016).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill is a compromise. The bill does not remove the requirement that motorcycle riders wear helmets, it just prevents law enforcement officers from pulling over and ticketing a rider for that reason alone.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Kelley; Bob Hawkins; William Kempker, Freedom Of Road Riders; Abate of Missouri; and Joe Widmer.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that anything that weakens the current helmet requirement will increase the number of brain injuries and deaths caused by motorcycle accidents. The state has an interest in preventing these accidents because ultimately the state pays for the care of those persons who suffer severe brain injuries. Even if the individual has health insurance at the time of the accident, if he or she becomes permanently disabled he or she will ultimately qualify for state support. This is a public safety issue; motorcycles are the most dangerous vehicle on the road and helmets save lives.

Testifying against the bill were Maureen Cunningham, Brain Injury Association; Robert Grider, Missouri Motorcycle Safety (MMSP); Missouri State Medical Association; Missouri Psychiatric Association; Missouri Hospital Association; AAA Auto Club of Missouri; Missouri College of Emergency Physicians; Michael Sparks; Missouri Academy of Family Physicians; and Bill Whitfield, Missouri Department of Transportation.