

HB 2158 -- HELMET RULES

SPONSOR: Roden

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 9 to 3.

This bill allows qualified motorcycle and motortricycle operators to operate without a helmet if they have both medical insurance and proof of financial responsibility under Chapter 303, RSMo. The medical or health insurance must have benefits of at least \$1 million for accidents involving motorcycles or motortricycles.

Proof of coverage may be shown using a copy of the operator's insurance card.

This bill is similar to SB 556 (2018).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that more people have died wearing a helmet than not and they believe that this is a freedom issue. Helmets are restrictive, hot, and don't necessarily save lives.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Roden; William Kempker, Freedom of Road Riders; Tony Shepherd, Abate Missouri; and Joe Widmer, Freedom of Road Riders, Inc.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that, regardless of any insurance requirement, riders who are injured and suffer from a traumatic brain injury will be dependent on family members or the state to physically and financially support them for the rest of their lives. Helmets help prevent serious injuries. Opponents reminded the committee that driving is considered a privilege, not a right; we place a number of restrictions on drivers to ensure safety. Opponents stressed that this change will cost taxpayers and giving riders the freedom to choose whether or not to wear a helmet means forcing taxpayers to pay for the inevitable medical costs.

Testifying against the bill were Maureen Cunningham, Brain Injury Association of Missouri; Missouri State Medical Association; Missouri Department of Transportation; Raymond Pierce, Missouri Motorcycle Safety Program; and Missouri College of Emergency Physicians.