



The fate of 2010's Senate Bill 1918; the "Stiffer Penalties" Bill.

As many know, ABATE of Florida, Inc. had a Bill introduced in the recently finished 2010 Florida Legislative Session designed to create a new law establishing penalties for hitting a motorcyclist. Many in FL have heard the tales of a biker getting hit and sometimes killed by a vehicle, and the at-fault driver only receiving an \$87 ticket. At ABATE of Florida's request, FL Representative Greg Evers sponsored Bill 875 in the FL House of Representatives (for the second year in a row) and Senator Dave Aronberg sponsored twin Bill 1918 in the FL Senate.

Thanks to Committee Chairpersons Sen. Gardiner, Sen. Dockery, Sen. Crist, Rep. Aubuchon, Rep. Ambler, and Rep. Murzin, both the Senate and House Bills made it through their assigned Committees. In the last House Committee, Rep. Evers decided to help expedite the process and let the House adopt the Senate version. In doing this, Rep. Evers gave up the prestige of passing a Bill with his name on it for the sake of the safety of all motorcyclists in Florida.

On Wednesday the 21st of April, the Senate version was placed on the Special Order Calendar and on the 23rd it was heard on the Senate Floor. From the 23rd until the 29th it was heard several times on the floor and each time came up against heavy opposition. During this time it had nine different amendments attempted to be attached and the jail time was ultimately stripped from the original language.

One amendment by Sen. Oelrich from the district that covers Alachua County and nearby areas stated that the penalties would *ONLY APPLY IF THE MOTORCYCLISTS IS WEARING A HELMET. IF YOU HIT & KILLED A MOTORCYCLIST THAT WAS NOT WEARING A HELMET, THE PENALTIES DID NOT APPLY.*

There was also talk if the Bill was successful an amendment would be added that would **REQUIRE ALL MOTORCYCLISTS TO WEAR A HELMET AGAIN**. This would in effect repeal Florida motorcyclists' right of choice that we now enjoy. It was soon apparent that if the Bill was to be passed the opposition would require some type of helmet amendment.

Therefore, our options were: 1) pass a very weak Bill that had been stripped of all its teeth; 2) let a strong Bill pass that would require helmets to be worn; or 3) let the Bill die and try again next year. Since a very weak Bill was worthless and being forced to wear helmets again was totally unacceptable, the decision was made to let the Bill die and try again next year.

We have many elections coming up this fall. Some of the Legislators named above may be up for re-election; some new names may be on your ballots. It's time to learn about the individuals you want to represent you and your ideals. It's time to work with ABATE of Florida and elect motorcycle friendly candidates to represent us all in Tallahassee.

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