



April 17<sup>th</sup>, my first morning at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Freedom Rights Rally begins. Waking up to the sounds of bikes being ridden through the Monticello KOA campground, familiar “hey, great seeing you, how ya been?” greetings, and the smell of eggs and bacon mixed with campfires is always a fond waking of the senses. Of course, bikers walking by our campsite with quizzical expressions looking over and seeing me typing away on my laptop is kind of humorous, but they’ll understand better as they read this in the magazine.

Chatting with Scribe on the 7 hour drive up and later hanging out with friends that I only see every two months, combined with the common goals ABATE of Florida, Inc. members have had me thinking about how effective a well organized Motorcyclist Rights Organization (MRO) can be when it comes to exerting influence on our elected officials.

Take our own state for example. In Florida, our Legislators are now in session for two months. Knowing this, ABATE of Florida, Inc. organizes our annual Freedom Rights Rally around this time each year. Most of you know about the hundreds of motorcyclists that ride to the state Capitol building for our rally on the rotunda. Afterwards, we go into the Capitol and meet with our elected officials.

In years past, ABATE of Florida’s State President has led our ride from the Monticello KOA to the Florida State Capitol building and continued by leading the ceremonies before we head inside. What’s going to make this year different is while we’re outside tolling the bell honoring those that have passed before us and letting the public know why we’re at the Capitol, our “Stiffer Penalties” Bill SB1918 will be being heard in its first Senate Committee Hearing. ABATE of Florida’s President & State Legislative Trustee will be testifying for passage of our Bill at the exact same time we are rallying for motorcyclists’ rights just outside the same building.

If ABATE of Florida’s members were not committed to our causes, if our 32 chapters were not pushing for our issues on the local level, and if the State Board of Directors were not working so well with each other towards a common goal, many of our victories would not be possible. These are signs of a well-organized Motorcyclist Rights Organization. Getting the law changed so motorcyclists have the choice to wear a helmet, have a choice how high their handlebars are, and have the option to get the “Bikers Care” motorcycle tag; at the same time helping fund many charities; are all signs of the influence ABATE of Florida members have. The fact that Doc Reichenbach, our State President, is on a first name basis with almost every elected official in Tallahassee is a sign of how ABATE of Florida’s members affect the outcome of elections.

When you’re asked what “influence” is, direct the person to the accomplishments of ABATE of Florida and other MROs across the United States of America. Well organized MROs are not only a Brotherhood and Sisterhood, we’re the protectors of motorcyclists’ rights.

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