

A.B.A.T.E. of Pennsylvania's Response To the Legislative Budget and Finance
Committee Report, "Motorcycle Injuries and Fatalities since the 2003 Repeal of the
Mandatory Helmet Law"

A.B.A.T.E. of Pennsylvania has eagerly awaited the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee's report and has the following comments now that the report has been released.

Report Questions and Findings

The report was mandated by HR 349, which posed three questions.

HR 349 Question #1. "How many motorcycle crashes were reported in Pennsylvania during the first two years following repeal of the Helmet Law?"

The report finds that the number of crashes rose substantially as did the number of registrations. It implies that the crash rate rose more than registrations.

A.B.A.T.E. of Pennsylvania points out that the crash rate (crashes per 10,000 registrations) actually declined slightly since the helmet law was modified. Comparing 2004 and 2005 data (first two years with the modified helmet law) to 2000 and 2001 data (last two years of complete data with a universal helmet law), one finds that crashes rose by 31.5% while registrations increased by 34.8%. The crash rate over the two periods declined from 128.9 to 125.7 per 10,000 registrations.

HR 349 Question #2. "How many of the individuals involved in reported motorcycle crashes in Pennsylvania in the first two years following repeal of the Helmet Law in 2003 were wearing helmets?"

The report indicates that the helmet usage rate declined from 73% to 54% following helmet law modification. The only surprise A.B.A.T.E. finds is the inference that 27% of the Commonwealth's motorcyclists were not wearing helmets prior to the modification of the law. If that is the case, then only 19% of motorcyclists chose to take advantage of the choice afforded them under the modified helmet law.

HR 349 Question #3. "What was the increase, if any, in motorcycle injuries and fatalities specifically due to head trauma when not wearing a helmet?"

Here, the report fails to draw a conclusion, citing the absence of directly relevant data. It then goes on to cite data from several sources. From these sources...

A.B.A.T.E. of PA notes that the fatality rate remained the same from 2000/2001/2002 (5.9 per 10,000 registrations) to 2004/2005 (5.9 per 10,000 registrations).

A.B.A.T.E. of PA also notes that the incidence rate of major and moderate injuries to motorcyclists declined from 68.9 per 10,000 registrations in 2001/2002 to 64.5 per 10,000 registrations in 2004/2005.

Conclusions by A.B.A.T.E. of PA

According to the data, modification of Pennsylvania's helmet law in 2003 has not resulted in a significant increase in crashes, fatalities, or serious injuries to motorcyclists when the increase in registrations is taken into account. In fact, the rates have declined slightly.

A.B.A.T.E. of PA has believed for many years that the most effective means of reducing motorcycle injuries is accident prevention rather than accident survivability. To this end, we have consistently promoted rider education, driver education, enhanced public awareness of motorcyclists, and safe design of roads and traffic control devices.

Now that this report has proven that the helmet law modification did not increase the dangers to motorcyclists, A.B.A.T.E. of PA encourages the Legislature to turn its attention toward those things that do have an impact on the safety of the state's motorcyclists.