

My name is Jim Kennedy and I am a resident of Seven Hills Ohio. I am also the person that is responsible for starting the movement that lead to this Bill. I want to thank all of you for your time.

Currently the State of Ohio specifically prohibits the use of ear plugs while riding a motorcycle. This is an antiquated law that ignores the health of the rider and the medical profession's better understanding of what causes hearing loss. Simply put, this law requires riders to expose themselves to sound levels that are far in excess of what OSHA allows in the work place.

We are not talking about loud motorcycles with excessively loud exhaust systems. The riders that started this process dislike loud bikes as much as the next person. But even with full face helmets and quiet bikes the wind noise is very loud. In general sounds that are above 85db are considered harmful. Studies have shown that inside a full face helmet wind noise is exceeding 100db.

Riding without hearing protection for most of your adult life has been proven to reduce your hearing ability by 20 to 60 percent by the time you reach age 60.

It is important to note, when we ride we are being exposed to those levels for hours at a time. Because of that I and most riders I know wear ear plugs regardless of the law. Some of us are getting tickets, and have been unable to get a judge to dismiss them.

Even Ohio's BMV recognizes this is an issue, and in their printed motorcycle handbook that is given to all new riders they suggest ear plugs. Unfortunately, that is being removed as our efforts to change this law drew their attention to the conflict with state law. But I think it is important to note that the BMV viewed this as an important issue, and never considered that there would be such a ban in place.

The only possible reason for this ban is the concern that riders would not hear emergency vehicles or other traffic around them. That concern ignores the way ear plugs work. Ear plugs block bad noise, and allow normal noise to still be heard. Recently my wife and I were in update New York on a motorcycle trip. We were in heavy traffic and I was paying attention to what was in front of me, and not watching behind me as well as I should have. A police vehicle was behind me with his lights on, responding to a call. He gave me a very short blip of his siren. I had no trouble hearing it at all. And I have no trouble at all hearing sirens even when they are coming from a side street. I can hear the cars around me, engine noise, tire noise all of it without any trouble at all. The concern that we won't hear what we need to hear is simply unfounded.

When I started this process two years ago seven States had similar bans on hearing protection in place. As of today there are only two States remain. It is time for Ohio to do the same. This change will put no one in any additional danger and will help a great many riders protect their hearing. I urge all of you to support this Bill and thank you for your time today.

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