

Last week Tom McGrath defended two motorcyclists who were charged with riding two abreast. For those who were not on the distribution list when this story first ran, it is considered reckless driving in Virginia for two motorcycles to ride next to each other in the same lane. In 48 of the 50 states it is perfectly legal. Only Vermont and Virginia make it illegal and only Virginia makes it punishable by up to 12 months in jail, a \$2,500 fine and a loss of your operator's license. In this case the two riders, one of whom has a commercial driver's license, pulled up next to each other at a stop light in Crewe, Virginia. When the light turned green they started off together and then separated shortly thereafter. Because of the short distance traveled side-by-side, the judge felt that he had no choice but to find the evidence sufficient to convict both of reckless driving. However, upon being informed that this year there will be a bill before the General Assembly to repeal this prohibition, the judge agreed to continue the disposition until after the General Assembly session. Hopefully we will be successful.

Two weeks ago Jim Cannon and I drove up to Harrisonburg to meet with Delegate Tony Wilt about this issue. He is the Delegate for the Harrisonburg area and is a rider himself. I am happy to report that Delegate Wilt has graciously and enthusiastically agreed to carry a bill to amend the Code of Virginia to allow two motorcycles to travel abreast in the same lane. Being that there is absolutely no data from the 48 states which allow this practice to show that it is causing accidents, it does not seem appropriate to hang a reckless driving conviction around a law abiding citizen's neck for an act that is not reckless. If you would like to thank Delegate Wilt for carrying this legislation for us he can be reached at DeTWilt@house.virginia.gov

As mentioned in an earlier post, Delegate Todd Gilbert has agreed to be the patron for our bill that will prohibit motorcycle only checkpoints in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It was unanimously agreed upon at this year's legislative round table that this bill was our number one priority this session. If passed it will put to an end the discriminatory practice of targeting motorcyclists with checkpoints such as the one conducted in Arlington this year during Rolling Thunder. For those who are unfamiliar with that checkpoint I have attached the article which was written about it earlier this year. If you would like to thank Delegate Gilbert for carrying this bill for us he can be reached at DeTGilbert@house.virginia.gov

I would again invite all who can to attend this year's Lobby Day events. They will begin on Sunday January 15 at 12:00 pm. Virginia Coalition of Motorcyclists lobbyists will lead an informational meeting at the Holiday Inn Airport at 445 International Center Dr., Sandston, VA 23150 to discuss this year's legislation affecting motorcyclists. We will discuss the two bills mentioned above, and as always there will be numerous bills submitted at the last minute which will negatively affect motorcycling. As these bills are filed we will be able to identify them and discuss them at Lobby Day so that we can convince the legislators why they are bad bills. Those who participated in last year's Lobby Day remember the bill that we killed that would have prohibited children under eight from riding on a motorcycle as a passenger. With the help of Virginia motorcyclists we were able to make the argument that since no children under eight had been killed on a motorcycle in the past ten years, we as parents were doing a pretty good job of deciding when our children were old enough to safely ride as passengers on a motorcycle. The bill was unanimously defeated in sub-committee.

After the informational session, attendees will enjoy a free homemade BBQ dinner made by Stewart Newton and provided by several Virginia motorcycle rights organizations including ABATE of Virginia and the Virginia Bikers Association.

On Monday the 16th we leave the Holiday Inn at 8:00 am sharp for our annual trip to the Capitol. After lobbying our legislators, we will attend the opening of the House of Delegates daily session and be recognized from the floor. Afterwards, Tom McGrath's Motorcycle Law Group takes everyone to Penny Lane Pub for lunch as a thank you for coming to support Virginia Motorcyclists.

For more information you can call VCOM at (800) 437-9434. For Room Reservations call (804) 236-1111 and ask for the VCOM rate.

As always if you have any comments or questions about anything that I have written please feel free to contact me. I hope to see you in January.

Matt Danielson

McGrath & Danielson

Tom McGrath's Motorcycle Law Group

1-800-321-8968

Motorcyclelawgroup.com