

BikePAC gives motorcyclists a voice

Posted: Monday, Dec 11, 2006 - 11:41:58 pm PST

By BRIAN WALKER

Staff writer

Nonprofit focuses on education, legislation

POST FALLS -- Motorcyclists are rallying their troops for a political voice and to offer a perspective in the classroom.

BikePAC of Idaho was recently formed as a statewide grassroots nonprofit to promote motorcycle safety and address concerns of all riders at the state and federal levels.

"It was formed to bring together concerned individuals and motorcyclists from all corners of the state to protect their rights and further their interests," Post Falls' Tim Herzog said. "We feel that motorcycle rider education and awareness campaigns are two of the best ways to address serious safety issues."

The organization is open to all motorcyclists.

Statistics, and Idaho's growth, point to the need for motorcyclists to have a voice, Herzog said.

According to the Idaho Transportation Department, of the 549 motorcycle collisions reported in 2005, 26 resulted in a fatality. There were about 60,000 registered motorcycles, making Idaho among the top states in motorcycles owned per capita.

"Yet only a small number of motorcyclists are represented or involved in the protection of their rights," Herzog said.

Herzog, a member of the National Coalition of Motorcyclists legislative task force, recently visited with legislators during their North Idaho tour.

Last session, he, along with BikePAC member Willie Stephenson of Dalton Gardens, helped push through a law that allows motorcyclists to proceed through stoplights, with extreme caution, under certain circumstances. Idaho was the fourth state to implement such a law.

"We see ourselves in the information business, providing motorcyclists with information and tips on how to become involved in the legislative process," Stephenson said. "Most people don't know how and a lot don't care, but we're hoping some will."

Herzog said among the issues being considered for the next legislative session are increasing fines for those who cause accidents due to using cell phones.

"Tailgating is a real big issue with me," Herzog said. "There's a lot of time that doesn't need to be spent on the cell phone."

BikePAC endorses the American Motorcyclist Association's Justice for All program, which focuses on inadequate sentencing of drivers who seriously injure or kill others

on the road.

Herzog and Stephenson recently met with Post Falls school superintendent Jerry Keane about having BikePAC members offer motorcyclists' perspective in driver's education classes.

"We will be exploring the possibility of reestablishing a relationship with the motorcycle community," Keane said.

Stephenson added: "We want to explain why riders do what they do. We wear leather jackets not because we are mean, but it's part of our safety code."

BikePAC is separate from ABATE, another motorcycle group that has local chapters. Some members belong to both and each has their own priorities.

"BikePAC focuses on legislative priorities and education," Stephenson said. "We don't do charity work and we don't have social events. It's pretty much meat and potatoes."

BikePAC membership is \$20 or the "supporter" level runs \$10.

Information: www.bikepacofidaho.org, 777-1915

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Coeur d'Alene Press - Local and National News - Kootenai County, Idaho
P.O. Box 7000 / 2nd & Lakeside / Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814 / 208-664-8176

Coeur d'Alene Press Online is updated everyday between 9 - 10am PST.