



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Bill Would Boost Biker Safety

PATTY RITCHIE May 8, 2012

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION, DMV (DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES)**

Response to Surge in Biker Fatalities in Oswego County

State Senator Patty Ritchie has introduced a bill that would improve motorcycle safety by including awareness training in the DMV's mandatory, pre-licensing courses.

The bill was prompted by a recent uptick in motorcycle related accidents in our region, including four fatal motorcycle accidents already in Oswego this year—more than any full year since 2008.

According to the most recent data from the New York State DMV, there were 152 fatalities from 5,150 motorcycle accidents in 2009.

“Motorcycle fatalities and serious accidents are on the rise, as the number of riders increase in our region and across Upstate New York,” said Senator Ritchie. “My bill would increase safety for riders, as well as for those sharing the road with them. By including motorcycle safety training in the five-hour courses that all new drivers are required to complete, we’re taking the necessary steps that will help save lives.”

Senator Ritchie's bill, S.7138, amends Vehicle and Traffic Law to create a motorcycle safety and awareness component to the required five-hour driving course. Specific requirements would be set by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles.

“There are already provisions in law requiring training for work zone safety and road rage. It makes sense to include motorcycle safety training for new drivers, to educate them on how to properly and safely share the road with motorcyclists,” said Senator Ritchie.

In recent years, more New Yorkers are choosing to get around on motorcycles. In Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, the number of registered motorcycles increased 16 percent from 2007 to 2010, to 13,500 on the road.

Jefferson County saw the largest percentage increase during that time period (27 percent), while Oswego had the highest number of registered bikes (5,017).

The bill has strong support from motorcycle groups and enthusiasts in New York State.

“I have seen firsthand the devastation caused by a motorcycle accident, both to the injured or killed motorcyclist, and to the automobile driver who injured or killed him,” said Carmella Brown, owner of New York Rider magazine.

“Adding motorcycle safety and awareness education to required driving courses would help make automobile drivers more aware of how to safely share the road with motorcyclists. I applaud Senator Ritchie for taking this first step to protect motorcyclists and all other drivers,” Ms. Brown said.

“The majority of motorcycle accidents are caused by drivers who later claim that they ‘didn’t see the motorcycle,’ and so, by accident, at least two lives are ruined,” said biker advocate Ben Rabin. “If specific motorcycle awareness training was added to driver education requirements, countless lives would be

saved, and needless suffering greatly reduced.