

MYRTLE BEACH BIKE RALLY

HELMET LAW STRUCK DOWN



Its common knowledge that the City of Myrtle Beach is finished with motorcycles dominating its family-friendly beach scene each May. With all the controversy surrounding the Myrtle Beach Spring Rally, riders decided to strike their plans to travel to South Carolina this past May. I'm here to announce an important amendment.

But first, some history. Between the Spring Rally in early/mid-portion of the month, and the Atlantic Beach Bike Fest taking place around the U.S. Memorial Day, for years the city was awash in the roar of two-wheeled thunder for essentially the month. In fact, just a few years ago, organizers were touting the Spring Rally as the third largest bike rally in the United States behind only the Sturgis and Daytona Bike Rally.

Then the bottom fell out. Making it clear that motorcycles were no longer welcome, calling loud pipes a nuisance; the city also enacted tough noise-restriction laws and in 2008 Myrtle Beach city officials passed a law requiring helmets only for riders under the age of 21. That law has since been overturned by the South Carolina Supreme Court.

UNANIMOUS DECISION

Too late of a decision for the past Spring Rally, but in June the court's unanimous decision struck down Myrtle Beach's helmet law, finding that city ordinances cannot supersede state law. The court found, "Where local authorities allowed enforcing individual helmet ordinances, riders would need to familiarize themselves with the various ordinances on advance of a trip, so as to ensure compliance. Such burdens would unduly limit a citizen's freedom of movement throughout the State."

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A.M.A. APPLAUDES SENT A CLEAR MESSAGE

The AMA (American Motorcyclist Association) applauded the court's decision and pleased that the South Carolina Supreme Court sent a clear message to all jurisdictions that discriminatory laws against motorcyclists are unacceptable. The high court issued the ruling in response to a lawsuit filed on behalf of about 50 riders who were ticketed for riding without helmets shortly after the new law went into effect. In addition, the city would refund the money it had collected in fines and tickets would be expunged from any records.

Some claim Myrtle Beach is prejudiced against bikers. Naturally, Myrtle Beach officials maintain that the city's position has nothing to do with prejudice of any sort, and that it's simply a quality-of-life issue. Of course, authority and bikers mix like oil and water, so you can guess how all this will turn out next May. With memories like elephants, bikers are going to still ride down there anyway. But they're going to go hang out in North Myrtle or down to Murrells, or maybe they'll just stay in rented condos or their favourite campsite. But one thing for certain, they aren't going into Myrtle Beach spending their hard-earned money.

Mike Bechard - Editor



NEXT MAY BIKERS PLAN RETURN TO NORTH MYRTLE

