## Cyclists say safety isn't guaranteed by helmet laws

By CRAIG PIECHURA

A group of people with a common in-terest — motorcycling — have been mobilized into a strong special interest

lerest — motorcycling — have been mobilized into a strong special interest lobby in Lansing.

"Before we got organized, a lot of these guys would have had a hard time telling you who the governor is," says Vince Consiglio, legislative director of Michigan ABATE. "Now most can tell you who their state senator and state representative are and how they voted on the helmet law."

ABATE of Michigan, is a statewide chapter of a national organization opposed to mandatory belmet law regulations. ABATE's slogan is "Let Those Who Ride Deside" and its position is that more education, not more helmets, is the only way to protect the motocycle-riding public.

The ABATE organization was foundating public.

The ABATE of "Easy Ride" magazine. See 1976, 32 stays in the nation have repealed mandatory helmet laws for motorcyclists.

Unlike other lobbyists in Lansing, few in the helmet repeal effort dress in Brooks Bros, suits. Most who ride to the hearings on their motorcycles wear motocycles wear motorcycles wear motorcycles.

hearings on their motorcycles wear

hearings on their motorcycles wear protective leather gear.

But, like any politically aware lobyists, they know the legislative ropes and keep tabs on how lawmakers vote on the issue. ABATE representatives take time off from work to ably trade documented statistics with their main opponents, insurance lobbyists, when the bills come up for discussion.

THEY PHONE or knock on the doors of their elected representatives before a helmet law repeal bill is being heard, and they can tell you how many votes

House Insurance Committee this Thursday.
One sure sign of motorcyclists' growing political clout is the allegation made last month by state Sen. Alvin Grow, Republican from Pigeon, that fellow senators were "stampeded" to apeal the law by politically-active clubs and organizations such as ABATE.

ABATE stands for "A Brotherhood.

ABATE.
ABATE tands for "A Brotherhood Against Totalitarian Enactments" but officers in the Michigan chapter would like to change that to the less heavy-handed sounding anachronym "American Bikers Aiming Toward Education," explains Carl Decker of Southfield, vice president of ABATE.
Bikers' dislike of helmets is deeper than a desire to ride with their bair flaming in the breeze, says Decker

charact science or ride with their hair.

In the control of the co

are needed to get a stalled helmet bill out of committee.

Despite a recent victory on Nov. 13 harried, owns a home and a Harley-Davison, and probably voted when the Michigan Senate voted 21-11 to repeal local laws requiring motocyclists to wear helmets, and 21-12 to appeal the state law, ABATE members expect a fight when the same bills come up for discussion before the state House Insurance Committee this Thursday.

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away from the pretext this country was founded upon.
"If the government really wants to save lives, why don't they force people to learn to ride motorcycles and cars instead of forcing them to wear a questionable piece of equipment?" In conjunction with efforts to repeal the mandatory helmet law, Michigan ABATE is pushing for tougher state testing of applicants applying for a li-

cense to ride motorcycles.

Some ABATE members say they'd condinue to wear helmets when riding motorcycles in busy traffic even if the law is repealed in the state. But members of the organization say it is infringement on their personal liberties for the state to demand that all riders wear helmets at all times.

Most voters, say Decker and Rhoades, don't ride motorcycles and therefore pay little attention to the helmet law issue. But imagine the public outcry, both men say, if the state Legislature tried to pass a law making it a crime to drive a car without wearing seathelts.

Secretary of State Richard Austin has said that insurance rates for motorcyclists and car drivers will rise if the mandatory belmet law is repealed.

"A LOT of people are just giving in-surance companies another excuse to raise their rates," says Decker.
After surveying average insurance rates paid by ABATE members throughout the country, members of the organization said they failed to dis-cover higher premiums being paid in the 32 states that voted to repeal man-datory helmet laws.

the 33 states that voted to repeat man-datory helmed laws.

"Nine of the 10 states with the worst increase in molorcycle fatalities for the total year, 1978-79, according to the Fatal Accident Reporting System (of the National Highway Traffic Safe-ty Administration) were states that still have helmet laws on the books," said Packfor.

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Statistics cited by proponents of mandatory helmet laws, said Rhoades, are often selective and misleading.

"For example, in one state where the

law was repealed there was close to a 40 percent increase in fatalities one year, 'Rhodes said. 'They point out the increase of deaths of motorcyclists but fail to say that there was also a 41 percent increase that year in fatalities for (drivers of) heavy trucks.'

A statistic cited by motorcylists pushing for repeal of the law is that motorcycle fatalities rose 166.7 percent in Rhode Island in 1971 when helmeds were made mendatory and declined by 40 percent in that state the year the helmet law was repealed.

Statistics are cited by both sides. But Pederal Department of Transportation tests have shown even the most expensive helmets deteriorate under lateral skids of 2½ miles per hour or more and are incapable of rejecting impact stress at speeds above 13 miles per hour.

## holiday gift ideas Postal service offers

The Postal Service this month is issu-The Postal Service this month is issu-ing some new philatelic products that will help get new stamp collectors started and keep veteran philatelists up to date on their collections, Farming-ton Postmaster Kenneth Harris says. "The 1980 Postal Service Mint Set being released this month contains all the commemoratives and special stamps released during the year — 28 stamps in all." Harris said. The new Mint Set will be available at

all post offices and will retail for \$5.

Also being issued this month is the Postal Service's seventh edition of Stamps & Stories. It contains informa-Postal Service's seventh edition of Folder, are now available at all Philastamps & Stories. It contains information for new stamp collectors, stories about US. stamps, details about price trends of selected stamp issues, catalogue numbers and an index listing of very US. stamp ever issued. The new book is still priced at \$3.50, the same as tyear.

Two new philatelic products, the

"Women's Mint Set" and the "U.S. Commemorative Stamps-Coral Reefs" Folder, are now available at all Phila-

Anne Sullivan, Dolley Madison, Frances Perkins, Molly Pitcher, Emily Bissell, Willa Carter and Harriet Tub-man.

The "Coral Reefs" folder is a new philatelic product and is similar in design to the winter olympic folder. It contains underwater photography, a mint block of four Coral Reef stamps, mounts, and interesting narrative on each reef.



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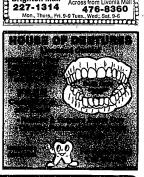
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