

LANE SPLITTING AS A SOCIAL GOOD

California Law An Accommodation For A Minority Group

After decades of tolerance by authorities and much study and debate, riding past stopped or slowly moving cars and filtering up to crosswalks at controlled surface street intersections is now officially recognized by law in California. Motorcycles really *are* a social good when riders are permitted to share the road with others this way, and now California state law is on their side.

This is not about legislation to take care of a constituency having power, money or influence. It's exactly the opposite. This is about formally empowering a minority for the greater good.

I don't share some riders' libertinism about this. Over simplistically, I see choosing to ride as essentially choosing to become part of an elective minority. As if one could choose to become a Native American, black, disabled or (born) Jewish person. I've had personal experience with the latter, and this is what makes me want to see lane splitting formally blessed by the government. I watched as various subsets of civil rights movements progressed during my lifetime, and, overall, I like what has happened.

I believe that, without the force of law, there would be far fewer civil rights for so many different minorities. Voting rights. Integration rights. Special-needs persons' rights. The list goes on and on. This progress, in aggregate, is the greatest value of the United States to the world. This quest is our core greatness as a people. It is what makes our country so exceptional and so important to the future of all of humanity. No other place on the planet has a melting pot of minority groups to the degree we do. And no other place has such high aspirations about fairness, equality, inclusion and accommodation for all.

To me, this journey toward the administrative furtherance of civil rights has been the overarching accomplishment of my generation, far exceeding all the wars and scientific and technological advances which have also occurred during my lifetime.

As difficult as it is to compare apples and oranges, let me try. The moon landing was cool and very important in many ways, but raising one more person without racial hate trumps it as a national accomplishment to be proud of.

Which brings me back to lane splitting.

People who are entitled to vote sometimes don't get to vote in some places without some kind of formal affirmative action law sanctioning it for them. And people with disabilities don't always get full



By Andy Goldfine

access (from curb-cuts at sidewalks to 10,000 other accommodations) without some kind of formal affirmative action law. Similarly, leaving lane splitting alone, based on libertarian values, will not help riders who want to do this.

In some imperfect way (as most laws are), this practice needs to be formally blessed, so the majority (drivers)

can learn to better tolerate and accommodate the minority (riders). This accommodation and tolerance needs to be sanctified for one reason: It is the right thing to do. For everyone.

So now, with one U.S. state formally recognizing lane splitting as legal, the new law will be a powerful lever to help obtain similar laws in other states. This is why the California legalization is so important. It has zilch to do with accommodating any significant constituency and everything to do with accommodating a [numerically] insignificant one—us riders—for the ultimate benefit of all.

With the law's passage now accomplished, it serves as a springboard toward having lane splitting formally recognized elsewhere. History shows that lane splitting—like all other forms of socially desirable, legally protected rights and accommodations—will, after a brief transitional period, become widely accepted and will be appreciated by the public.

A letter template for contacting your legislators to request this is here: www.aerosti.ch/2cbuM18.

It's simple and easy to find your legislator's name, email and postal address online through the AMA website. (Visit the AMA Action Center under Rights at www.americanmotorcyclist.com.)

The letter tells them this common sense, congestion-relieving practice has been accepted in California and most other developed countries for many years and will make your state's roads safer.

Also that public debate, followed by enacting a law like California's, will change voter attitudes from, "Hey, that motorcycle rider is taking cuts!" to "Great! That's one less car in my way." Something welcomed by all who share our roads.

Resources about lane splitting are available at: <http://www.ridetowork.org>, www.lanesplittingislegal.com, as well as at www.americanmotorcyclist.com.

Andy Goldfine, an AMA Charter Life Member and former member of the AMA Board of Directors, is the founder of Aerostich and of International Motorcycle and Scooter Ride to Work Day.

"This is not about legislation to take care of a constituency having power, money or influence. It's exactly the opposite. This is about formally empowering a minority, for the greater good of everyone."