



Is Green the New Gray Area?

By Mark Buckner

Executive Director – Motorcycle Riders Foundation

For as long as I can remember – which is getting to be a LONG time! – those of us who love riding motorcycles and have devoted a large part of our lives to preserving and protecting our way of life have been telling anyone who would listen that the enemies of motorcycling don't just want to pass more and more restrictive laws where we're concerned. Their ultimate goal is to get us off the road entirely. A prime example of this is the recent push to outlaw internal combustion engines, just one of the issues the Motorcycle Riders Foundation and our partners in the state motorcyclists' rights organizations and the motorcycle aftermarket are fighting head on.

So why are internal combustion engines under attack? The Biden administration is calling for one in two new cars sold in the 2030s to be fully electric. Federal incentives intended to prop up 'green' proposals have been pushed through Congress. In some states, these initiatives have become all the rage, calling for the elimination of all internal combustion engines and the end of fossil fuels as an energy source. California's plan to ban all internal combustion engines by 2035 is the most obvious of these, while similar plans have been launched around the country and the world. On the surface, that might sound bleak for those of us who love our gasoline-powered bikes, cars, trucks, and boats, but there may be good news on the horizon. As more research is coming to light from a feasibility, a financial, and an environmental perspective, initiatives targeting zero greenhouse gas emissions are being reexamined.

The Connecticut state legislature, like their counterparts in California, initially targeted the elimination of internal combustion engines by 2035, but has now decided to pump the brakes, killing Senate Bill 1145 which would have set unattainable greenhouse gas emission goals. Part of that bill would have penalized non-compliant parties up to \$25,000 PER DAY for not meeting stated objectives, labeling the penalties as a 'tax'. Other uncoordinated decarbonization 'roadmap bills' are still being considered in Connecticut, but the all-out push to join states like Massachusetts, California, and others is on the decline.

Ohio is pushing back as well. Their state legislature recently passed House Bill 201, signed into law by Governor Mike DeWine. HB 201 prohibits state agencies, counties, or townships in Ohio "from restricting the sale or use of a motor vehicle based on the energy source used to power the motor vehicle." It also specifically prohibits a state agency from adopting the California emissions standards for motor vehicles. ABATE of Ohio played a major role in getting this law on the books. In northern Europe, Norway, which had targeted zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, is likewise backing off on its plan as its feasibility becomes less certain.

None of this is to say that we shouldn't be concerned about pollution. We absolutely need to address these issues, especially in our major cities. But the outright elimination of vehicles powered by fossil fuels is not the answer.

Regarding the general public's opinion on an all-electric solution, many people are less than enthusiastic about moving away from gasoline-powered alternatives. According to the Sierra Club, in 2022 66% of car dealerships did not have an electric vehicle for sale. We can only assume that's because there was no market for them. Today, thousands of car dealerships around the country are pushing back on the Biden plan, saying they can't sell the electric vehicles they already have in stock. Car manufacturers are backing off as well, curtailing production of new EVs. Why is that?

First and foremost, electric vehicles are expensive. Some studies suggest that people who can afford to buy all-electric cars represent a finite group, and that many of those consumers have already purchased an EV car or truck, meaning the available pool of buyers is shrinking. Also problematic is that due in large part to the high cost of battery replacement, there is a very small market for used electric vehicles. Basically, no one wants to buy them knowing that a big repair bill is headed their way. While battery technology will likely improve in coming years, as of today that technology and questions about the cost of building a sufficient charging infrastructure are major concerns for consumers.

Finally, we should never forget that for the 'nanny state' crowd, going all the way back to Ralph Nader and the original safety-crats of the 1960s, the mantra has remained the same. That being, where safety is concerned, the public can't be trusted to make their own decisions or manage their own risks. In other words, these fine folks think they're smarter and better equipped to make policy decisions than us mere citizens. In their delusionary 'Road to Zero' world - where there will be zero accidents and zero fatalities - the best way to get there is to get rid of what they consider to be dangerous activities - like riding motorcycles. Eliminating internal combustion engines could go a long way towards achieving that goal.

Just as we have since the 1980s, the Motorcycle Riders Foundation is standing up for motorcycling, fighting against issues like the elimination of internal combustion engines, and we need every concerned rider to join us in our mission. If you're not already a member of the MRF, my only question to you would be 'why not?'

The answer: <https://mrf.org/join>

For independent aftermarket motorcycle shops: <https://mrf.org/join-mrf-imac>