



Kevin Wing

## MONTANA EMBRACES LANE FILTERING

*The 'Big Sky' state joins California and Utah in adopting lane-sharing legislation*

**By Kali Kotoski**

**M**ontana has become the third state after California and Utah to adopt lane-filtering legislation, a technique that is widely practiced around the world to limit traffic congestion and increase rider safety.

Signed into law by Gov. Greg Gianforte on March 2, the legislation allows motorcyclists to overtake stopped or slow-moving vehicles by filtering between lanes at reasonable speeds not in excess of 20 mph and as conditions permit.

The legislation, which goes into effect Oct. 1, is the culmination of nearly four years of advocacy by the bill's sponsors, state Sen. Russ Tempel (R-SD14) and state Rep. Barry Usher (R-HD40), as well as stakeholders such as the AMA.

"We applaud the efforts of Montana's motorcycling community and the state's legislators, and thank Gov. Gianforte for

signing this legislation into law," said Russ Ehnes, chair of the AMA Board of Directors, who attended the signing ceremony.

The AMA endorses lane splitting, often referred to as lane filtering or lane sharing, given the long track record of success in California and bolstered by research from the University of California-Berkeley that shows that the practice enhances motorcycle safety.

Motorcyclists are at a greater risk of front- and rear-end collisions during heavy periods of stop-and-go traffic, and lane splitting eliminates much of that hazard for motorcyclists who pass between lanes, the study found. Additionally, lane splitting was found to mitigate the severity of injuries when done in traffic moving at 50 mph or less, and if motorcyclists do not exceed the

**L to R: Sen. Terry Gauthier, Gov. Greg Gianforte, Sen. Russ Tempel, AMA Board Chair Russ Ehnes in back.**



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speed of traffic by more than 15 mph.

Lane-splitting legislation is widely popular with riders in states with dense urban populations and chronically congested roadways, and the benefits of the practice are slowly starting to make their way into government discussions regarding how to reduce traffic fatalities.

Since Utah's common-sense legislation came into effect in early 2019, motorcycle fatalities on such roads have continued to decline from 28 in 2018, to 18 in 2019 and only eight in 2020, according to the Utah Department of Transportation.

While the majority of European Union countries have long allowed legal lane splitting, it is also common in South America, the Gulf States and many parts of Asia. In other Asian countries, in particular, lane spitting serves as the de facto rules of the road

despite a lack of codified legislation, especially in developing nations where two-wheeled transportation is the dominate form of travel.

Despite America being an outlier in adopting lane-splitting laws to reduce traffic fatalities and injuries, states like Oregon, Washington and Massachusetts have lane-splitting bills being considered during this year's legislative sessions. Proponents of the bills in those states, which include active AMA participation, claim there is growing momentum across party lines that prudently adopted lane-splitting laws can be beneficial for all road users.

"As lane splitting support continues to gain traction across the country, I am eager to help more motorcyclists engage their state legislatures on this issue," said Tiffany Cipoletti, on-highway government relations manager for the AMA. The AMA assists groups, individuals and grassroots organizations in introducing legal lane-splitting bills to their states.

Utilizing studies produced by California, statistics in Utah and long-established European habits for lane splitting, there is growing academic and anecdotal evidence regarding the benefits of lane splitting increasing rider safety and reducing overall traffic congestion.

## ON THE RADAR

### Massive Wilderness Package Clears House; More Scenic Byways Gain Federal Designation

- The U.S. House of Representatives on Feb. 26 passed a massive public lands bill to preserve nearly 3 million acres of federal lands in Colorado, California, Arizona and Washington. **The Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act** – a package of eight bills – was passed along party lines. The package includes the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act and the Colorado Wilderness Act. The bill would create 1.5 million acres of new Wilderness, the most restrictive federal land use designation, and add 1,000 miles of waterways to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Under a Wilderness designation, motorized access to some Colorado trails such as the Bangs Canyon OHV Trail System and Dolores Canyon could be restricted. Supporters of the package see it as a strict, hard to rollback, conservation measure. Opponents claim it threatens local control over public land, hinders employment in extractive industry, and threatens recreational access for motorized users.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation has given 49 more roads the **America's Byways Designation**, bringing the total number of protected scenic byways to 184 across 48 states. The Byways program was originally created in 1991 with support from the AMA to preserve and enhance certain roads based on cultural, recreational and natural significance. The AMA was part of a coalition that revived the program in 2019. The program has designated roads such as the Blue Ridge Parkway and Hells Canyon as National Scenic Byways, and many more of the country's favorite motorcycling roads. The program provides resources that help communities along these byways benefit from the tourism and economic growth they generate. The AMA is currently working with stakeholders to achieve designation status.

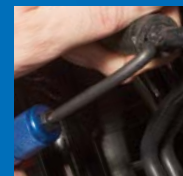
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