

2/14/11  
TESTIMONY

To: Transportation Committee  
From: Duncan Broatch  
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RE:

- ✓ 1. Proposed S.B. No. 715 AN ACT CREATING A UNIVERSAL ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE REGISTRATION SYSTEM.
2. Proposed S.B. No. 811 AN ACT INCREASING THE PENALTY FOR THE UNAUTHORIZED USE OF ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES.
3. Proposed S.B. No. 820 AN ACT REQUIRING ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES AND DIRT BIKES TO BE REGISTERED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND TO REQUIRE OPERATORS OF SUCH VEHICLES AND BIKES TO BE LICENSED BY THE DEPARTMENT.
4. Proposed H.B. No. 5104 AN ACT REQUIRING THE REGISTRATION OF ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES.

Dear Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero and Members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Duncan Broatch and I am here representing the New England Trail Riders Association (NETRA) in opposition to the above four bills.

These bills basically propose registrations and increased penalties for all terrain vehicles and dirt bikes (ATV's).

I am opposed to these bills because it does not make sense to require registration when there are virtually no areas on CT property where ATV's are allowed.

The problem is that there are approximately 70,000 ATV's in Connecticut but virtually no legal area to ride on public land. Dealing with the problem by enforcing fees and penalties at this point in time is, I believe, counter productive. It will not solve the problem. I believe that we should look at the other end of the problem by providing specific trails for ATV riders to utilize in a prudent fashion. Once the designated trails are provided a registration program can be launched to serve as a source for enforcement and maintenance.

NETRA is an organization of over 3,000 dirt bike enthusiasts with the common goal of promoting responsible off road motorcycle riding. NETRA holds dozens of riding events each year ranging from pee wee events for ages 5 to 11 to Enduro races for street legal riders. These events are held on private property and on state property under single use special permits. NETRA members have logged thousands of hours maintaining trails with an eye to preserving the environment. NETRA strives for a sustainable sport. For example all events begin with a rigorous sound test to ensure that all bikes are quiet.

Connecticut has thousands of acres of public land where many activities are allowed including hiking, mountain biking, horse back riding and hunting. Unfortunately ATV's are not allowed but for a relatively small area of Pachaug

State Forest where only street-legal ATV's are allowed. More ATV riding areas are needed and the street-legal designation needs to be dropped to allow participation by the younger segment of ATV riders.

We realize that there are off road Quad riders and also dirt bike riders that do not ride responsibly by trespassing and operating loud ATV's. We condemn that type of activity. We also realize that dirt bike riding may be stereotyped by some as a negative activity. I submit that the NETRA community of dirt bike riders is comprised of responsible, caring individuals.

Since 1971, dirt bike riding has been my primary sport and recreational outlet. It is a terrific and totally legitimate activity that offers many rewards including physical exercise, sportmanship and an outlet to appreciate the great outdoors. One of the greatest attributes of riding has been bringing up my son riding with me and seeing him become an enthusiast. This sport has shaped him in many ways - from reinforcing positive spirit to learning how to repair his own equipment. I'll never forget his first Junior Enduro race at the age of 9 when Ethan was stuck in a rut, impaired by a malfunctioning bike, exhausted and crying his eyes out. But he picked up his head, set his aim, gathered all his strengths and managed to overcome the pitfalls by finishing the event and collecting a trophy at the end.

Sometimes kids simply don't have many options when it comes to occupying their time. When kids are bored then not only is it a waste but it is potentially harmful because they can pick up negative traits and activities. Dirt bike riding is an excellent almost year round sport that provides kids with a rewarding challenge. Simply put it is good clean fun. Consequently we should promote responsible dirt bike riding to the maximum practical extent. Our first step should be to allow dirt bike access in state loaned land on specific, designated trails.

The subject bills are largely aimed at raising money by requiring the registration of ATV's. This does not make sense since Connecticut has virtually no areas where the ATV's can legally be operated. Bill No. 715 states that registration proceeds shall be used to construct and maintain dedicated ATV trails. This sounds good but we are concerned that the registration process would occur, money would be collected from ATV owners, but then no trails would be provided. For example Sec. 23-26C CGS states that DEP shall make some of DEP's properties available to ATV's. NETRA has been urging DEP to comply with this law for over 25 years.

What we could be amenable to is the following: A law that requires an ATV registration program to begin immediately after a specific allotment of trails have been designated for ATV use. Designate the trails then start the registration program. If man power is needed NETRA has plenty of individuals ready and willing to help in this effort, including myself.

Thank you for listening to my testimony. Please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Duncan S. Broatch