

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office  
FLOOR DEBATE

May 16, 2003

LB 303

make helmets optional for riders over 21 with two years' experience and a safety training program. Both men cite a study by a national traffic safety agency that showed fatality rates were higher in states with mandatory helmet laws for all riders than in states without such laws. But the state where the study was actually compiled by the ABATE Michigan branch, though represented by the group's web site as a 16-year-old study of all 15 states. Mr. Tyson with the traffic safety agency said federal studies actually showed just the opposite of the ABATE claim. These studies consistently show that fatality rates were lower when the universal helmet laws were in effect; most rates ranged from 20 to 40 percent lower. Mr. Drolet said he relied on the advice of another state representative, Gene DeRossett, who had been active on the issue. Mr. DeRossett did not return phone calls, though his staff also cited findings they said came from the safety...safe...traffic safety agency, but appeared...but actually appeared to have come from ABATE. After being questioned by the New York Times, ABATE changed the statement on the web site that said the study was conducted by the highway safety organization. Mr. Drolet said the matter only comes down to the freedom of choice. If we are to err on the side of liberty or government control, he said, I pick liberty. Linda Green, who lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan, sees it differently. Eleven years ago...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR HARTNETT: ...her son, Brian, then 26, was thrown from his motorcycle, an off-road bike. Though Brian, who was not wearing a helmet, survived, he suffered severe brain damage and then now is in adult foster care. It's better to be safe than sorry, she said. We're living the sorry. Her son's medical problem also highlights the issue of cost. Michigan takes care of him, she said of her son, adding that the cost topped over a million mark easily. All sides want a study on what role helmets, aging riders, horsepower, and other factors play. But an estimated cost between 2 million and 3 million does not appear imminent. James Berard, a Democratic spokesman on the House Transportation Committee said a new transit financing bill was in the early stage.