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FLOOR DEBATE

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And here are the conclusions that this particular study, by Ulmer and Preusser did on those helmet laws. They said, the 1998 universal helmet law repeal in Kentucky and the 1999 repeal in Louisiana produced effects similar to one another. Observed helmet use dropped from nearly full compliance under the law to 50 percent range without the law. Motorcyclist fatalities increased in the near term by sizeable amounts, by over 50 percent in Kentucky, and over 100 percent in Louisiana. Now, believe me, motorcycle registrations didn't go up nearly, nearly that amount in either of those states in that time period. The rates of fatalities per registered motorcycle increased in both states following the helmet law repeals, plus 37 percent and plus 75 percent. The experience in Kentucky and Louisiana is also similar to what occurred in Arkansas and Texas, two other states that have repealed universal laws in recent years, 1997, leaving little doubt that such repeals have demonstrable negative safety consequences. The weight of the evidence is that helmets reduced injury severity, that repeal of helmet laws decreases helmet use, and that states that repeal universal helmet laws experience increased fatalities and injuries. I want to go back just a second to the GAO study, the federal government study. They at one point addressed what they called the myth that helmets impair hearing and sight. What they found was that normal peripheral vision in a human being is between 200 and 220 degrees. Federal safety standards require that helmets provide 210 of vision. Over 90 percent of crashes happen with a range of 160. In other words, they're pretty much in front of you. So it's clear that helmets do not affect peripheral vision or contribute to crashes. Hearing is not affected either, they concluded. Helmets reduce the loudness of noises, but do not affect the rider's ability to distinguish between sounds. The University of Southern California conducted 900 on-scene, in-depth investigations of motorcycle crash scenes, and could not uncover a single case in which a rider could not detect a critical traffic sound. Some studies even indicate that helmets are useful in reducing wind noise and protecting hearing. Down in Oklahoma...and you don't have to listen to all this if you don't want to, but I want you to know that these things are out there.

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: One minute.