

# *Bruce on Bikers' Rights*

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## **“MRO” HAS NO “&” BETWEEN THE “M” AND “R”**

*On Soapbox Subversion and Sleeping With the Enemy*



Many believe that “**MRO**” is an acronym for “Motorcycle Rights Organization”. But that would make no sense. A motorcycle is a piece of property, and has no rights. Motorcyclists, on the other hand, *do* have rights. And *that* is what “MRO” stands for: **Motorcyclists’ Rights Organization.**

There is no “&” (ampersand) between the “M” and the “R” in “MRO”. That’s because the word “and” does not appear between “motorcyclists” and “rights” in the definitive phrase. This seemingly minor difference is actually a major distinction, in that what *could* be the focus of a “Motorcyclists’ and Rights Organization” and what *should* be the focus of a “Motorcyclists’ Rights Organization” are two different things.

**And how important is focus?** Given that we live in a world with finite resources, “focus” is fundamental to survival, success, and the achievement of any significant goal or objective. Focus is how we define those goals and target those objectives, and heavily influences how we allocate and expend our limited resources in their pursuit. A broad focus, for example, compels us to scatter and spread our resources, and dilutes our impact on any specific target. A narrow focus, on the other hand, allows us to concentrate our resources, and thereby increases the likelihood we will accomplish what we set out to do.

The focus of a “Motorcyclists’ Rights Organization” should be just that: Motorcyclists’ Rights. All MROs—national, state, regional or local—operate with limited resource bases. They only have so many members, and those members can only contribute so much of their time and money to the issues that MRO leaders bring to their attention. If that attention is diverted to issues that are not specifically related to motorcycles, motorcyclists or motorcycling, then the MRO’s limited political capital is diverted as well. As I have said before, “... **we fight to protect the freedom and promote the interests of American motorcyclists ... to defend our right to choose our own modes of transportation, attire and lifestyle ... to deter and defy discrimination against us ... and to vanquish those who violate our rights or right-of-way.**” If an issue does not fall within that framework, then it has no place in any MRO platform, publication or agenda.

**Immigration reform**, for example, is a noble and important cause, but it does not fall within the bikers’ rights framework. Immigration reform is also an explosively divisive issue, and those misguided “freedom riders” subverting our soapboxes to spew flawed and fraudulent traffic statistics while wrapping prejudice in American flags and calling it patriotism do more harm to the cause of bikers’ rights than they can imagine. And immigration reform is certainly not the only political issue that should be left out of the MRO mix. When an MRO takes a stand

on *any* non-biker issue, it risks shrinking its political base—and squandering biker political capital—by unnecessarily alienating riders who might disagree with their position. In other words, for an MRO to be fully effective it must focus on matters that appeal to the broadest political base—i.e., the motorcycling mainstream—while avoiding as much as possible those contentious and often petty issues that “divide the tribes”.

**Charity** is also a noble and important cause. But it is only suitable for MRO agendas if the money being raised is going to an appropriate recipient. Downed riders, and riders down on their luck, should certainly qualify as appropriate recipients. But I am not convinced that MRO philanthropy should extend much beyond that. Yes, an argument can be made that raising money for popular charities increases our “goodwill”. But I think we need to take a long, hard look at (a) just how much—or little—goodwill is actually generated, (b) whether that goodwill is actually doing anything to advance our political agenda, and (c) whether an alternative investment of our time and money might give us better payback. And if nothing else, we should at least make sure we aren’t giving our hard-earned money away to “causes” that don’t really deserve it ... people who don’t really need it ... or worst of all, parties who politically oppose us—**which might very well include lobbyists and physicians cashing healthcare facility checks covered by the deposits of our donations**. MROs may at times be forced to sleep with the enemy, but we sure as hell shouldn’t be paying for the privilege.

Until Next Time ... Ride Long, Ride Free!

Bruce Arnold