

Equal Access

Have you ever had a service station attendant refuse to turn the pump on because of your mode of transportation? How about a motel clerk tell you that they don't have any rooms and when you point out the VACANCY light is on he immediately turns it off. With only a dozen cars in the parking lot at 10:30pm he explains they have all gone to town. Or pull up to a Parking Garage and read "No Motorcycles Allowed", stop to eat or head for a club and read a sign that says "No Motorcycle Attire", etc.

While drafting this Bill we did our best to address any problems, which might be anticipated by all groups that could be affected. We first met with officers of the Texas Hotel/Motel Association. They were stunned to hear that we could give them recent occurrences of being turned away by motels in Texas. Most recently, at the time, was our chairman (Sputnik) being refused service by Motel 6 just north of the capitol when he rode in from Galveston to attend a House Committee Hearing. Not only did they agree that this should not be allowed to happen but the President offered to testify in our favor if needed.

Next meeting was with the Restaurant Owners Group of Texas. After much talk about the safety need for leather when you ride, the time consumed in removing and replacing the leathers when you continue your trip and the lack of safe storage for these expensive items while you are inside they agreed with us on that issue. Next line of conversation was concerning manners especially loud and vulgar language while dining. While we agreed that conversation might be loud given that they may have ridden a couple of hundred miles without conversation but they seldom cursed in such surroundings. WE also let them know they could check with any waitress and they would learn that bikers appreciate good service and tip much higher than average citizens. They agreed that they had no problem with the Bill.

Our meeting with the Parking Garage Owners elicited the information that their concern was liability. This concern stemmed partly from the fear that the entry bar used in some garages might close prior to the motorcycle clearing its path. Another concern was a vehicle might head into a vacant parking spot only to learn too late that a motorcycle was parked there. We agreed that for those who had the bar, they could provide space at some convenient location and the others could mark off a few "Motorcycle Parking Only" spaces and allow motorcycles to park in the yellow spaces to small for vehicles.

Bar owners just didn't want problems such as fights in their establishments. We told them if an individual created a problem we whole-heartedly agreed they should be banned from an establishment. But not all riders should be tarred with the same brush. For Clubs and Restaurants we agreed if there was a dress code in effect, not aimed at banning any particular group of individuals then it would be honored despite the Bill becoming law.

The School Boards and Principals group were concerned this Bill, if it became law, would create problems for them in keeping street gangs in check. We worked that out by wording the Bill in such a way that it did not include places of education or school activities either on or off school property. They were satisfied with that proposal.

We are not asking for any special treatment, only that we have equal protection under the law as provided to others in this state. If a business wishes to have total control over who they may and may not serve they can open as a Private Club rather than a Public Accommodation. Then of course they would have the right to serve only their members. We would have no problem with that.

Thank You for your time.
