

## AKTI's "One-Hander" Bill (SB 274) Passes California Senate Policy Committee; Appears Headed to Governor's Desk

The American Knife and Tool Institute retained Chris Micheli of the California lobbying group, Carpenter Snodgrass & Associates, to spearhead our efforts to save the exemption for one-hand opening knives in the current California law that bans the sale of switchblades longer than two inches. He filed this report on April 3, 2001.

"I am pleased to tell everyone that AKTI's bill in California, SB 274 (Karnette), passed the Senate policy committee (which I consider to be our toughest challenge for the bill) this morning. Appearing in support of the bill were CJ Buck of Buck Knives (representing AKTI), Dave LaBahn of the California District Attorney's Association (CDA), and the River-

side County Sheriff's Dept. After brief testimony from the supporters, the bill was passed unanimously from committee and next heads to the Finance Committee, before the full Senate will vote on it probably in May.

"We are off to an important start and I am pleased with the reception that we got from this first committee. In meeting with the senators last week and yesterday about the bill, they were generally supportive of the knife industry and were happy that we had been able to work cooperatively with law enforcement to craft a measure that both parties were agreeable to."

CJ Buck, when asked about the general tone of the hearing, described the committee members as "supportive

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and obviously impressed that we had the clear support of the law enforcement community. My presentation probably lasted only five minutes before the committee chair moved to pass our bill out of committee. The vote was unanimous."

The AKTI strategy of introducing the bill in the Senate proved to be successful. The Senate was generally considered by the AKTI lobbyist to be the tougher forum (compared to the Assembly) for this issue. Based on this scenario, it is believed the bill will now pass quickly through the Senate Finance Committee; then move through committees in the California Assembly. From there it goes to the Governor for expected signature in August or September.

Buck adds that "this revised law ultimately touches virtually every responsible company in the knife and tool industry. One-hand opening knives are big sellers in one of the largest markets in this country and AKTI had to move forward to save them. Without the AKTI initiative, the District Attorney's Association would have moved aggressively forward to ban all one-handers in the state."

### AKTI's Proposed New California Amendment

Here is the current California anti-switchblade statute (653k) with the AKTI-proposed revised and/or new language inserted next to it as detailed in SB 274.

**Every person who possesses in the passenger's or driver's area of any motor vehicle in any public place or place open to the public, carries upon his or her person, and every person who sells, offers for sale, exposes for sale, loans, transfers, or gives to any other person a switchblade knife having a blade two or more inches in length is guilty of a misdemeanor.**

**For the purposes of this section, "switchblade knife" means a knife having the appearance of a pocketknife and includes a spring-blade knife, snap-blade knife, gravity knife or any other similar type knife, the blade or blades of which are two**

**or more inches long in length and which can be released automatically by a flick of a button, pressure on the handle, flip of the wrist or other mechanical device, or is released by the weight of the blade or by any type of mechanism whatsoever.**

**"Switchblade knife" does not include a knife that is designed to opens with one hand utilizing thumb pressure applied solely to the blade of the knife or a thumb stud attached to the blade, provided that the knife utilizes a detent or other mechanism that (a) provides resistance that must be overcome in opening the blade, or (b) biases the blade back toward its closed position.**

**For purposes of this section, "passenger's or driver's area" means that part of a motor vehicle which is designed to carry the driver and passengers, including any interior compartment or space therein.**

# A.G. Russell Takes Personal Action In Arkansas On the AKTI Legislative Action Plan

## A.G. Russell, AKTI Board Member, Takes a Simple First Step, Gets Invitation to Meet with U.S. Congressman and Gets Response from Commissioner of U.S. Customs

Every enterprise, great or small, starts with a single first step. A.G. Russell, Chairman of an Arkansas knife company with the same name, learned the power of that lesson in February 2001. "As individuals and individual knife companies and as an entire industry, we are in jeopardy unless we're willing to stand up to be counted as owners and makers of knives," he said.

When a fellow-AKTI-member-company, Columbia River Knife and Tool Company (CRKT) of Oregon, endured a 16-day seizure by U.S. Customs of 50 of its models of one-hand-opening knives in October 2000, A.G. Russell realized a severe injustice had been done. Thanks to a costly legal defense and a U.S. Congressman and U.S. Senator writing a letter to U.S. Customs on its behalf, CRKT ultimately got its knives back. But the price the company paid was enormous. Lost sales prior to Christmas were estimated in excess of \$1 million, legal bills topped \$30,000 and the personal toll on CRKT owners and employees was significant.

"As if that wasn't enough," A.G. said, "U.S. Customs dropped their action only after CRKT agreed not to sue them and to pay U.S. Customs for any costs of wrongly charging them in the first place."

The entire CRKT fiasco struck very close to home for A.G. Russell. Several years ago an arbitrary decision by a local U.S. Customs office nearly cost A.G. his business and wreaked considerable havoc in his personal life.

He decided it was time to stand up and be counted. What did he do? He took the simple first step of writing a

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*"It is a clear abuse of power for Customs personnel to interfere with product performance or its basic characteristics."*

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letter. That letter went to his U.S. Representative, Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas, who happens to be the brother of one of the U.S. Senators from Arkansas, Tim Hutchinson. Asa Hutchinson is also on the powerful Oversight Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

A.G. identified himself as a voter, taxpayer and business owner in Arkansas. Then he got to the reason for writing. He raised his primary concern about the treatment of CRKT by personnel in the Portland office of U.S.

Customs, their supervisors up the line, and ultimately by the U.S. Customs Commissioner in Washington, D.C.

"There are two issues in the CRKT case that have not been widely publicized," A.G. noted. "One of the CRKT knife models has a pivot screw that applies tension to the blade. Customs personnel loosened that screw so it would be easier to flip the blade open and support their argument that the knife acted like a switchblade. Then they admitted they loosened that screw, and their wrongful action was supported all the way up the line of supervision to Washington."

A.G. made the point that tampering with a product in that way would be analogous to adjusting a set-screw on an automobile carburetor so it failed an EPA test. "The job of Customs is to evaluate whether imported products are coming into this country legally and whether they meet certain established standards. It is a clear abuse of power for Customs personnel to interfere with product performance or its basic characteristics," A.G. declared.

Within a few weeks of sending his letter expressing these concerns, A.G. received a reply from Asa Hutchinson. Representative Hutchinson had sided with him and also written a letter of protest to Commissioner Kennedy of U.S. Customs.

Since Congress controls the purse strings for U.S. Customs, the Hutchinson letter had gotten the attention of Commissioner Kennedy. Kennedy, as expected, defended his field people and their supervisors. However, he did admit Customs personnel had loosened the set-screw.

When Congressman Hutchinson conveyed this report to A.G. in a letter of reply, A.G. sent his second letter. He thanked the Congressman for his time and attention to the matter, and once again re-capped his concerns about product tampering. He concluded the letter by asking the Congressman whether they could meet at a convenient time in the near future.

## BLADE Show Seminar Will Outline State-by-State Presentations to Lawmakers

Many industry executives have relationships with national and local lawmakers. Others want to begin this process that is part of everyday life, indeed survival, in many industries.

The **AKTI Legislative Action Plan** is intended to be a grassroots effort, one state at a time, conducted by executives of AKTI companies, who have a stake in their industry, a knowledge of their company and its products, and provide a portion of the tax base and employment opportunities in their region and state.

David Kowalski, Communications Coordinator for AKTI, will offer tips on starting this vital phase of corporate and industry survival at a seminar at the **2001 BLADE Show, Saturday, June 9, at 11:00 a.m.**

Consult show program for location. If you cannot attend but want to set up a presentation in your state, call him at (715) 445-3781 or email: [Communications@akti.org](mailto:Communications@akti.org). "I stand ready to help make your presentations as painless, professional and productive as possible," Kowalski says.

A.G. then got a follow-up call from an assistant to the Congressman. He was going to be in his field office in Arkansas in early February 2001. Did A.G. want to meet with him?

"I expected I would get 15 minutes with him," A.G. said. "He gave me 45 minutes. He was very gracious and I came away feeling very positive about having taken this initiative and about getting help from the Congressman."

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A.G. once again reiterated his concerns about the product tampering and the further support of misbehavior by Customs supervisors. Congressman Hutchinson reportedly assured A.G. he would put this episode before the House Oversight Committee.

"U.S. Customs has been given a lot of money to pursue drug traffickers but it appears they are using that money to pursue responsible American companies," A.G. adds. "I would encourage every manufacturer, distributor and retailer in this industry to meet with their Senators and Representatives to make sure they are providing real oversight of such agencies as U.S. Customs."

A.G. offers this final advice. "It doesn't matter what political party you belong to, these lawmakers have been elected to serve you. Call their offices. Write them a letter. Ask for a meeting. Get to know them. In today's business and political climate, you need to have a relationship with your elected representatives."

**AKTI**  
**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Thursday, June 7, 2001**  
**4:00 p.m.**  
 Chancery Room  
 Renaissance Waverly Hotel  
 Cobb Galleria Center  
 Atlanta, Georgia

## Colorado Manufacturers Meet To Plan Legislative Action

The leaders of three Denver-area companies met with David Kowalski, AKTI Communications Coordinator, on April 9, 2001. Charles Hoffman, President of Boker USA, Inc. of Lakewood, Colorado (800-992-6537) was the host. He was joined by David Bloch, President of Outdoor Edge Cutlery Corp., Boulder (303-530-7667); and Sal Glesser, President of Spyderco, Inc., Golden (303-279-8383).

The group discussed strategies for expected meetings with Colorado's lawmakers, both state and national. Colorado has a rich heritage of knife use. It is a key destination state for skiers, hunters, fishermen and women, hikers, campers and bikers, as well as several other sports-minded groups. The Colorado group will develop data on the economic impact of the knife and tool industry

in their state, as well as other pertinent information.

"I welcome your willingness to take action," Kowalski told them. "That's really what AKTI is all about ... taking sensible and responsible direct action ... one state at a time. That strategy will ultimately produce a coalition of lawmakers who know we exist and support our responsible efforts on behalf of our industry."

If you're Colorado-based and would like to join this effort to implement AKTI's Legislative Action Plan, contact the executives named above.

AKTI has developed several news releases and informative brochures as source materials when meeting with your state lawmakers. Contact David Kowalski 715-445-3781 or email: [Communications@akti.org](mailto:Communications@akti.org)

## YES, I will join AKTI and help support responsible knife use!

**Give generously! Your membership dues help ...**

- 1) Meet AKTI's California lobbyist commitment of \$50,000 to save one-handers in 2000 and 2001!**
- 2) Communicate regularly with knife users and the editors of more than 50 outdoor publications!**
- 3) Work with AKTI state groups to organize meetings with their lawmakers.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Ambassador Member (Individual) - \$35/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Platinum Associate - \$1,000/yr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bronze Associate - \$100/yr                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Premier Member - \$2,000/yr     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silver Associate - \$200/yr                     | <input type="checkbox"/> (Voting Membership)             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gold Associate - \$500/yr                       |  |

I support AKTI with an additional contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Visa/Mastercard Charge: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you prefer to not receive any possible additional mailings.

Note: Since the American Knife and Tool Institute, Inc. has filed as a 501(c)(6) not for profit tax status, dues may be deductible as a business expense, but not as a charitable contribution.



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on AKTI Forum or go to  
[www.bladeforum.com](http://www.bladeforum.com)  
or [knifeforum.com](http://knifeforum.com)

**New Address 7/1/01:**

22 Vista View Dr  
Cody, WY 82414-9606

## Oregon U.S. Senator Ron Wyden Hears Concerns of Knife Industry Executives



U.S. Senator Ron Wyden conducts a "Town Meeting" with employees of Benchmark Knife Company, Inc., of Oregon City, Oregon. As a result of his support of training programs at a local tech school, Benchmark President Les de Asis was contacted by a staff member of the Senator and asked if the Senator could visit his plant. After the plant tour, Senator Wyden spent 30 minutes in October, 2000 meeting with de Asis and several other Portland-area executives of AKTI member companies.