**Modernizing Ohio’s Knife Laws**

**The Problem: Confusing Knife Laws in Ohio**

Existing knife laws in Ohio are complex and unclear, patched together through various legislation and amendments that have left everyone from citizens to law enforcement confused. Law-abiding, well intentioned Ohioans seeking to carry a knife for everyday work and activities – such as tradesmen, hunters, and campers – risk arrest simply by possessing a standard pocketknife that is **legal** to own. In fact, in Ohio, it is legal to own any knife, but because Ohio Revised Code (O.R.C.) 2923.11 defines “deadly weapon” as any “instrument, device, or thing capable of inflicting death, and designed or specially adapted for use as a weapon, or possessed, carried, or used as a weapon,” it is virtually impossible for an individual to know what may be considered a deadly weapon.

To illustrate the point, a roofer may carry an automatic knife in his pocket as part of his customary tools. While perched on a ladder, he only has one hand to open and lock the blade. When the roofer finishes for the day, he slips his automatic knife into his pocket with the belt clip visible. Technically, this individual *could be* in violation of O.R.C. 2923.11and 2923.12, even though the knife is not being carried for protection or as a weapon. In fact, there are numerous cases in Ohio where individuals have been found guilty of violating this law, only to have the Ohio Appellate or Supreme Court overturn the case, noting that the knives were not proven to be deadly weapons. In most cases, the knives were instead simply a tradesman’s tool used by the individual for daily work[[1]](#footnote-1).

**The Solution: Legislative Reform**

The American Knife & Tool Institute (AKTI) contends that the vast majority of knives are carried as tools, and the current vagueness in Ohio’s definitions create a needless uncertainty that discourages law-abiding Ohioans from carrying and using their tools. We believe there is a simple fix to protect individuals and provide consistent enforcement: define what knives are deadly weapons, and what are not. We propose the following amendment to O.R.C. 2923.12:

H) For purposes of this section, "deadly weapon" does not include any knife, razor, or cutting instrument, the blade of which is not more than four and a quarter inches in length."

The proposed amendment would clarify that small knives, including pocket knives, are legitimate tools, and will protect the right of law-abiding citizens to choose what knife to use and carry for work or in recreational activities.

**About the American Knife and Tool Institute**

AKTI is a non-profit organization representing all segments of the knife industry and all knife users. Formed in true grassroots fashion by concerned industry leaders after considerable discussion with individual knife makers, knife magazine publishers, and a broad section of the knife community, AKTI has been the reasonable and responsible voice of the knife community since 1998. AKTI is widely-recognized as a respected, credible and accurate knife industry source, seeking to educate and inform legislators, law enforcement, and the public about our industry.

At AKTI, we believe that most people who carry a knife, do so for common, everyday purposes. People engaged in the building trades, agricultural and animal husbandry use and carry knives on a daily basis. Knives are also essential for many outdoor activities, including hunting, fishing, fur trapping, hiking, camping, boating and other such activities. Our goal is to ensure that law-abiding citizens feel knowledgeable and confident in their ability to carry the tools they use for their daily and recreational lives.

AKTI promotes common-sense solutions to issues facing law-abiding knife owners nationwide. AKTI’s mission is to partner with policy makers and law enforcement officers to craft legislation to help address legislative vagueness, from the elimination of archaic terminology that is no longer objectively relevant, to the passage of statewide preemption of local knife ordinances, to the repeal of obtrusive or unnecessary knife laws.

1. These cases include, but are not limited to, Ohio Appellate Court, State v. Cattledge 2010 and State v. Thompson 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)