



HELP REFORM ANTIQUATED KNIFE LAWS IN VERMONT

What Are Automatic Knives?

An automatic knife (also known as a switchblade) is a knife with a blade that is exposed in an automatic way and moved from the closed position to the open position exclusively by the release of a compressed spring.

Automatic knives are currently legal in some capacity in forty-one states and are one of several "one hand deployment" options found to be extremely useful, primarily in the professional trades and by outdoor recreationalists. In both of these examples, the use of a one-handed knife that opens automatically is often critical to effectively and safely accomplishing the task. To illustrate, 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, making the automatic open a necessary feature. This same example could be used for a fisherman, who is holding his catch with his left hand while simultaneously using an automatic knife to cut the line of a swallowed hook with his right hand. In both cases, the task may be technically achievable with other tools, but is accomplished more quickly and more safely with an automatic knife.

The Problem: A 1950s View on Automatic Knives

In the 1950s, Vermont joined many other states and the federal government in passing laws to restrict the manufacture, possession, and use of automatic knives. In Vermont, this problem is compounded by the fact that knives are not included in the state's preemption statute, allowing any municipality to create more stringent rules regarding these tools (for clarity, municipalities may not regulate firearms or ammunition). These laws were put on the books at a time when automatic knives were the perceived weapon of choice for criminals; if this was ever the case, criminals have long moved on, and today, automatic knives are far from the leading "dangerous weapon." Instead, automatic knives are used by well-intentioned law-abiding citizens such as tradesmen on the job or outdoorsmen on a hunt.

In the last decade, more than a dozen states have amended their knife laws in ways that permit more law-abiding citizens to carry and use automatic knives the way they would any other tool. In states like Vermont, with a strong outdoors culture, the need to liberalize laws restricting automatic knives is even more apparent.

The Solution: Pass H. 49 and H. 124

Vermont statute currently allows certain switchblades, but only if they are below three inches in length. This arbitrary distinction does little to promote public safety and creates a "gotcha" situation for otherwise well-intentioned citizens. In addition, Vermont's lack of statewide preemption means that each of Vermont's 255 municipalities could conceivably have a different standard, creating confusion and likely causing some Vermonters to leave their tools at home. outlaws the manufacture, transfer, or possession of automatic knives. Thankfully, Rep. Patrick Brennan has introduced two bills, H. 49 and H. 124, which will address preemption and the arbitrary automatic knife length restriction, respectively. AKTI strongly supports these pieces of legislation, and urge the Vermont Legislature to consider them during the current session. Doing

so would bring Vermont in line with states like New Hampshire and Maine, which have both modernized their automatic knife laws in recent years, and protect well-meaning Vermonters in the outdoors and in the trades.

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.