

2/15/2012

Dear Representative,

The possession of a knife in Alaska is not just a common practice, as it may be in other states, but in many cases the possession of a knife in Alaska is a necessity, which can determine the difference between life and death, between surviving and perishing.

Alaska currently has a prohibition on the possession of gravity knives and switchblade knives. Unfortunately, in many states the standard definition of these knives as used in Alaska's current statute, has resulted in the prosecution and jailing of people in possession of knives which are not, in fact, gravity knives or switchblade knives. Rather, these are folding pocket knives that are commonly used for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, on worksites and other outdoor and everyday activities, and represent some 80% of the knives sold in the U.S. today.

In many states this definition has led to thousands of dollars in fines and court costs, for both the defendants and the jurisdictions prosecuting them. HB55 would clarify the definition of gravity knives and switchblade knives so it clearly does not include average, everyday knives that are commonly in possession by the public. HB55 protects honest law abiding Alaskans from potential legal jeopardy.

Knife Law Preemption Amendment:

Because knives are so prevalent in Alaska and possession is so common, knife laws around the state should be consistent. What is legal in Juneau should be legal in Barrow. Alaskans should be able to know that the law is consistent statewide. Alaskans already benefit from state firearms preemption, which makes the gun laws of Alaska consistent throughout the state. The same should hold true for knives.

Preemption would assure that if you change the definition of switchblades and gravity knives with HB55, it will apply statewide.

As we have seen in recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings, the Second Amendment is an individual right and that right has been incorporated to apply in the states. For this reason alone, all states should have knife preemption laws to assure that citizens are protected from onerous local laws, which infringe on their rights.

Beyond that argument, knife preemption laws make sense. Preemption allows law enforcement as well as citizens to know that what is legal in Anchorage is legal everywhere in Alaska.

It is for these reasons, as well as others, that Knife Rights strongly urges you to vote YES on HB55 and YES on the preemption amendment.



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