

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



## SENATOR FRED DYSON SENATE DISTRICT F

### SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR SB 11

*An Act amending certain provisions of criminal law prohibiting the manufacture, sale, transfer, or possession of switchblades and gravity knives; adding definitions of 'gravity knife' and 'switchblade' to the criminal law; and reserving to the state, with limited exceptions for municipalities, the authority to regulate knives*

SB11 repeals the prohibition in the law for adults to possess knives identified in Alaska Statute as a 'switchblade' or 'gravity knife'; adds language that these knives may not be sold or transferred to a person under 18 years of age without the prior written consent of the person's parent or guardian; and further states that an unemancipated minor under 16 years of age may not possess a switchblade or gravity knife without the consent of a parent or guardian of the minor.

SB11 provides definitions for gravity knives and switchblades to make clear the distinction between gravity knives which are deployed from the handle by the force of inertia, or gravity; switchblades, which are opened from the handle when a spring or button is pressed; and other pocketknives which can be opened with one hand and have a bias toward closure which must be overcome with applied pressure. Finally, SB11 amends Title 29 *Home Rule Municipalities and Municipal Powers and Duties* to include regulation of knives.

Criminal law should be reserved for conduct that is either blameworthy or threatens public safety, not wielded to undermine our personal liberties and economic freedom. SB 11 seeks to remove from the law obsolete language that does not serve a real public safety interest. The 2011 Uniform Crime Report for Alaska shows that knives were only used in 2% of 386 assaults on law enforcement officers, with none resulting in injury to the officer. In 2010 and 2011 Alaska State Troopers report zero assaults on their personnel that involved any knife. Knives and all cutting instruments of any type were used in less than 21% of all reported aggravated assaults in Alaska over 2010 and 2011. In short, the data does not support criminalizing possession of these knives and current law prohibiting possession of switchblades and gravity knives is incongruous with Alaska law which permits any non-felon 21 years of age or older to carry a concealed firearm without a permit.

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