

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Session:
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone: (907) 465-2679
Fax: (907) 465-4822
Toll Free (800) 505-2678

Interim:
600 E. Railroad Ave
Wasilla, AK 99654
Phone: (907) 376-2679
Fax: (907) 373-4745

Representative Mark Neuman

Rep.Mark.Neuman@akleg.gov

Sponsor Statement HB 33

"An Act adding definitions of 'gravity knife' and 'switchblade' to the criminal law."

In Alaska, spring loaded knives are an important tool used by hunters, anglers, and craftsmen. According to the American Knife and Tool Institute, there are over 35.6 million Americans who carry and use some type of utilitarian knife which opens with one hand. In the United States, assisted-opening and one-hand-opening knives now make up 80 percent of all knives sold.

In recent years some jurisdictions have acted to restrict the type of knives individuals may carry. In a number of instances this has been done by attempting to define common pocketknives as switchblades, gravity knives, or other knives.

Frequently that switchblade definition is assigned to a knife capable of being opened with one hand and having a "bias towards closure". A "bias toward closure" simply means it has a spring, detent, or other mechanism, which maintains the knife in a closed position until the bias is overcome with applied pressure.

A knife of this configuration falls short of the definition of switchblade used in other states and by the federal government: "...any knife having a blade which opens automatically (1) by hand pressure applied to a button or other device in the handle of the knife, or (2) by operation of inertia, gravity, or both."

Presently Alaskan's are able to purchases these knives in Alaska and online. They are used in the work environment and in recreation. This bill simply clarifies that one handed hunting and utility knives do not qualify as a switchblade and as such are legally owned.

I would appreciate your support