

October 17, 2019

To: The Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee

RE: SB140 Senator Joe Uecker / Senator Kristina Roegner - [SB140 Passed the Senate 32 - 1](#)

Dear Representatives,

I am Todd Rathner the Director of Legislative Affairs for Knife Rights Inc. We are an organization representing knife owners, collectors, makers, and manufacturers. I write in favor of the passage of [SB140](#). Ohio's knife laws are confusing and can cause average citizens who want to obey the law to be arrested and charged with a crime simply for carrying an everyday tool.

Knife Rights has reformed the knife laws in 22 states (31 total bills) over the past 9 years, including the repeal of switchblade bans in 16 states with no increase in violent crimes, and not a single state has moved to repeal these reforms. In total, 44 states allow possession, sale and manufacture of switchblade knives. Ohio is surrounded by states where switchblades are legal: Indiana (ban repealed in 2013), Kentucky, Michigan (ban repealed in 2017) and West Virginia. All allow possession, sale and manufacture of switchblades and we are working in Pennsylvania to help them catch up as well.

The legislative efforts in the 16 states where we have repealed bans on switchblades have all been bipartisan. Blue leaning states like Illinois, Nevada, Colorado, have joined red leaning states like Texas, Tennessee, Kansas and a dozen others to repeal these antiquated laws. The reason for this bipartisan support is rooted in dual aspects of repealing these archaic laws. 1) Those who rightly see this as criminal justice reform and 2) those who see this as a liberty (Second Amendment) issue.

We know that African Americans and Hispanics are much more likely to be charged with an illegal knife possession violation than whites. In New York City that number is staggering. According to the Legal Aid Society of New York, in excess of 80% of those arrested are African American or Hispanic. The ACLU has worked side-by-side with Knife Rights to pass knife reform laws in Montana, Nevada, New York, Washington and Wisconsin.

While carried and used daily as a tool by millions of Americans at home, work and for recreation, occasionally the knife is used as an "arm" in self-defense protected by the Second Amendment. First responders throughout most of America carry a one-hand opening knife in order to use their other hand to stop a person from bleeding out or while they cut them out of a vehicle or some other situation where the responder needs to use their other hand to save a life. Ohio law is confusing regarding the carry of these critical, life saving tools, as is pointed out in this article on the [Buckeye Firearms webpage \(https://www.buckeyefirearms.org/clearing-confusion-about-ohio's-knife-laws\)](https://www.buckeyefirearms.org/clearing-confusion-about-ohio's-knife-laws). First responders cannot confidently carry any knife (a person must make sure it is not concealed) without fear of prosecution. SB140 solves this problem.

It is baffling that it is **legal** to possess or carry **any knife** openly, including a switchblade knife, but it is **illegal** to "manufacture, possess for sale or furnish" a switchblade knife in Ohio (2923.20 (6)). Ohioans wanting to possess these popular knives must purchase one in neighboring states with that tax revenue lost to Ohio. Retailers and manufacturers who could bring jobs and revenue to Ohio are needlessly thwarted from doing so. This will be remedied with the passage of SB140 to the benefit of Ohio's coffers and its law-abiding citizens.

Current law is preventing at least one major knife manufacturer in Wayne County, Rick Hinderer knives, from bidding on potential contracts with police and military agencies, because the company is forbidden by statute from manufacturing switchblades in Ohio. They are currently considering moving the manufacturing process and the jobs associated with it out of state if this statute is not remedied.

It is time for Ohio to join the other vast majority of states that treat these knives as the common tools they are, as opposed to irrationally banning them for their design, how they open or how they are carried. Any criminal use of knives against another person remains fully covered by existing Ohio law, as it should be. It is for these reasons that I urge you to support SB140 and send it to the full Senate for a vote.

Respectfully Submitted,



Todd Rathner  
Knife Rights, Director of Legislative Affairs