

American Knife & Tool Institute
Executive Committee Meeting (BOR & Advisory)
Teleconference Call Monday, August 21, 2006 1:00 p.m. Eastern

The Executive Committee Teleconference meeting of the American Knife and Tool Institute on Monday, July 17, 2006 was called to order at 1:00 p.m. EDT by AKTI President Mike Jones (Gerber). Other Regents present: Les de Asis (Benchmade), CJ Buck (Buck Knives). Others present: Jan Billeb, Executive Director; David Kowalski, Communications Coordinator; Dan Lawson, Attorney. Regents absent: Gil Hibben (Knifemakers Guild) (provided proxy), Tom Arrowsmith, (W.R. Case), Jack Igarashi and Jeff Goddard (Kershaw), A. G. Russell and Goldie Russell (A.G. Russell Knives). Other: AKTI Vice President David Hall (United) (provided proxy).

These minutes are formatted on a per-subject basis, not the chronological discussion.

TSA – David Kowalski and CJ Buck

David Kowalski reviewed the preliminary assessment from Barry McCahill on a possible TSA initiative noting McCahill interviewed a wide range of individuals to obtain perspectives from various representative groups. McCahill advised that pursuit of issue would be unsuccessful and potentially damaging to AKTI credibility in future. Consensus to table any further discussion on a TSA initiative until such time as circumstances may appear more favorable.

State Law Initiative – David Kowalski and Dan Lawson

Dan Lawson reported reviewing Arkansas and Tennessee as promising states to initiate knife law changes. Arkansas appears to Lawson to be the most likely state to start an initiative as Tennessee has other knife legislation pending right now.

Arkansas has a simple statute 5-73-121 where Subsection (a) states that “a person who carries a knife as a weapon, except when upon a journey or upon his own premises” ... is presumed to be carrying a weapon because of blade length, specifically, ... “(b) If a persons carries a knife with a blade three and one-half inches (3 ½”) long or longer, this fact shall be prima facie proof that the knife is carried as a weapon.” Lawson offered the opinion that a “journey” would probably be considered something more than going downtown for daily errands.

Lawson felt there were two options: (1) repeal of entire section; or (2) repeal of Subsection (b). If AKTI successfully repealed Subsection (b), the State would have to prove intent to use as a weapon. His recommendation was to make an effort to repeal Subsection (b). The argument would be that this law is susceptible to inconsistent enforcement because many people would fall into the category of carrying a knife with a 3-1/2 blade or longer for several legitimate and common uses including household carving sets, hunting knives, etc. He believes the state of Arkansas could be persuaded that such a proposed amendment/repeal would not be viewed as a profound change by law enforcement.

Lawson outlined a proposed process to repeal that would involve: (1) Identifying sponsor(s) in Arkansas legislature- each House and Senate; 2) Finding an Arkansas lobbyist to shepherd the process; (3) Identifying and contacting entities / organizations, i.e. police, attorney general’s office, district attorneys, prosecution attorneys that would influence the likelihood of passage and ascertaining their positions; (4) Identifying and contacting organizations that might assist AKTI in the process, i.e. statewide sportsmen’s’ associations, retailer sporting goods groups, etc.

Mike Jones noted there would probably be no support from Walmart (headquartered in Arkansas) as they are cautious from a legal standpoint of involvement in such issues. CJ Buck noted that in California any opposition seemed to stop all efforts. He felt the lesson learned in California was that working with and responding to possible opposition upfront was essential to their ultimate success in amending 653k.

As for a national effort to promote laws that did not make possession a criminal act, Jan Billeb suggested contacting such organizations as national policemen, attorneys’ groups, attorneys general, etc. and open dialogue to find out what changes they would consider.

Discussion followed on model laws to place in states versus approaching each state for possible changes. Lawson noted that even the NRA has not been successful in creating national legislation. He stated that since each state has

existing laws on the books, attorneys and law enforcement know the laws, their various elements, and what they can do with that law. Trying to change the law completely could result in more opposition than making amendments.

Kowalski suggested that rather than develop rigid model legislation AKTI develop specific key language for possible scenarios such as ... possession is not proof of intent. Kowalski and Lawson will work on wording for possible legislation and then come back to the Executive Committee for input. Kowalski will scout for an Arkansas lobbyist and he and Lawson will further develop the strategy outlined by Lawson. It was noted that it was important for AKTI industry people to be involved in any action in Arkansas, or other states, and that the organization should not rely solely on lobbyists as an intermediary in communicating with legislators and other stakeholders.

AKTI Repositioning Campaign – David Kowalski

David Kowalski emailed a list of possible repositioning statements from Goldie Russell, Buck personnel and Rick Thronburg (William Henry Knives). His plan is to work with Jan Billeb and pare the list down to three possible and send out a ballot to the Executive Committee. Mike Jones suggested, and it was generally agreed, that Kowalski take the lead on the theme instead of the executive committee looking at each possibility and he indicated he personally liked the concept of “we’re your neighbors.”

Wall Street Journal Response and Proposed Editorial – David Kowalski

David Kowalski continues to work on an editorial response to the Wall Street Journal article and would like to build the repositioning statement into it. Barry McCahill suggested to him that AKTI take a public service tone with whatever AKTI does, then present its message within that framework. For example, remind owners that knives will be taken from them at airport security, but they have the option to put them in checked baggage. This would allow AKTI to add the key message, for example, that most Americans carry and use knives as part of their everyday life. Kowalski reported that he’s aware that some companies and individuals have submitted responses to the WSJ article, but is not aware of any that have been printed. CJ Buck noted conversations with large retailers (REI, Cabella’s, etc.) who were not concerned with the WSJ article, felt it had minimal impact and we should not let the article drive any AKTI effort.

Welcome Gil Hibben – New Knifemakers’ Guild President

The new Knifemakers’ Guild president Gil Hibben will be their representative on the AKTI Board of Regents. It was agreed that Gene Shadley should be sent a thank you letter for his past contributions.

Newsletter Distribution and Schedule – David Kowalski

Les Edelstein has been contacted by David Kowalski for a list of possible retailers to send newsletters to start AKTI’s efforts at distribution through retail stores. Several NICA members have also agreed to distribute them. Kowalski provided a list of proposed topics and mailing schedule by email. The “Hot Topics” section will be used to provide information pertinent to current members. Some of AKTI’s other materials need to be rewritten and will be used as newsletter topics. He does not anticipate a shortage of topics.

SHOT Show – David Kowalski

David Kowalski and Jan Billeb have talked about the possibility of AKTI having a booth at the SHOT Show in the lobby where with other public service type of organizations. Kowalski expects show management to offer space to AKTI.

United States Knife & Tool Association – Mike Jones

Jan Billeb explained the confusion between the AKTI and USKTA (the newly formed organization for knife users started by Douglas Ritter) in the recently emailed article printed in the New York Post. She questioned whether AKTI should address the use of a name so similar, what AKTI could do to try to do encourage Ritter to work within AKTI, and if anyone had talked to Ritter recently about his efforts.

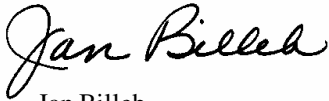
Mike Jones noted he has talked to Ritter recently, and Ritter has indicated he will be at Blade Show West in Portland. His platform is that he wants to be strictly an organization for knife owners. His website wrongly positions AKTI as representing only manufacturers. He aspires to be “like the NRA” and represent the grassroots knife owner. De Asis explained that Ritter has developed a great reputation in his field of emergency survival tools. David Kowalski will communicate more with Ritter.

Kowalski Retainer Proposal

David Kowalski disconnected from the conference call. Mike Jones moved to support Kowalski's Retainer Increase Proposal, effective September 1st, seconded by CJ Buck. Proxy votes yes by David Hall, Gil Hibben, A.G. Russell. Carried unanimously.

Les de Asis moved to adjourn, seconded by CJ Buck. Meeting adjourned 2:23 p.m. Eastern.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jan Billeb".

Jan Billeb
AKTI Executive Director