

**American Knife & Tool Institute**  
**Executive Committee (BOR & Advisory)**  
December 14, 2007 2:00 p.m. Eastern

The Executive Committee Teleconference meeting of the American Knife and Tool Institute on Friday, December 14, 2007 was called to order at 2:15 p.m. EDT by AKTI President Goldie Russell (A.G. Russell). Regents present, A.G. Russell (A.G. Russell Knives), Gil Hibben (Knifemakers Guild), CJ Buck (Buck Knives), Les de Asis (Benchmade). Advisory members present: None. Others present: Jan Billeb, Executive Director; David Kowalski, Communications Coordinator; Dan Lawson, Attorney; Palmer Freeman, South Carolina Lobbyist. Regents absent: Jim Warick (Gerber), Jack Igarashi (Kershaw) and AKTI Vice President Jeff Goddard (Kershaw).

Lobbyist Palmer Freeman was introduced. He explained he had talked to lobbyists, law enforcement and solicitors and felt that there would be very little resistance to an effort to eliminate the wording in Section 16-23-405 and 16-23-460, which defines weapons and specifically “a knife with a blade over two inches long.” Freeman explained there was a knife show currently at the state museum featuring art knives, almost all being longer than two inches.

Mr. Freeman was in the South Carolina House for ten years and then worked as a lobbyist until last year when he ran for a judgeship and had to give up his lobbying clients. Since he lost the judgeship position, he has been attempting to return to lobbying. The AKTI effort would be his first client in a revived lobbying practice.

The South Carolina legislature starts the second Tuesday in January, meeting every Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday and Thursday morning until session ends in June. If the AKTI bill can be introduced as an uncontested bill, chances of success increase. Mr. Freeman still needs to identify sponsors and his plan would be to start a bill in both the House and the Senate, then pursuing whichever one seems to be moving faster. Each legislature has to go through three readings. He initially believes he would start it through the Agriculture Committee with Senator Wetherspoon. It was questioned if Title 16 is considered a Criminal Law change, why he would take that approach. Mr. Freeman believes Weatherspoon would be supportive and using the Agriculture Committee would send the appropriate message that knives should not be considered weapons. In the House he would contact Judiciary Committee member Jim Harrison.

Mr. Freeman stated that Dan Lawson did an excellent analysis of the law and agrees completely with Lawson’s suggested approach.

Mr. Freeman’s proposed fee is \$10,000 - \$12,000. If he discovers he cannot do it for that, he will find someone to take it on for that price. He needs to register as a lobbyist and someone will need to register for AKTI as the lobbyist principal.

David Kowalski noted he felt that this effort would meet less resistance than the Arkansas change recently accomplished, since Arkansas struck down a 3 ½-inch weapons standard,

while South Carolina has a 2-inch standard. He believes the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources would be even more supportive of the law change than the Arkansas DNR was.

Mr. Freeman was dismissed from the meeting.

Discussion followed regarding the importance of the effort to affect a change in South Carolina due to the number of hunters and recreational users. David Kowalski stated that in his contact with Palmer Freeman he would impress on him the importance of pursuing the support of the Department of Natural Resources and also put him in contact with Preston Bynum of Arkansas for any other ideas.

Les de Asis asked what the initial quote for fees had been. David Kowalski reported that Palmer Freeman had thrown out the figure of \$30-35,000. Kowalski's earlier recap of the efforts in Arkansas and Florida and the relationship between population affected and AKTI's lobbying costs helped put South Carolina's relative importance into perspective. He had explained to Mr. Freeman that AKTI has limited resources and that he should re-evaluate his proposed fees.

A.G. moved to approve hiring Palmer Freeman to represent AKTI's lobbying interest to remove the language in Sections 16-23-405 and 16-23-460 and to have Jan Billeb register as the lobbyist principal. Seconded by Les de Asis. Motion approved unanimously.

David Kowalski will follow up with Palmer Freeman and contact Jim Warick and Jeff Goddard regarding the discussion and decisions reached.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Jan Billeb, Executive Director  
American Knife & Tool Institute