

# You Can Now Bring a Knife to a Gun Fight

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When I was a kid, if you were watching a TV show or a movie and a guy pulled out a switchblade, there was about a 95% chance he was a bad guy. There was just something intimidating about a guy whipping out the knife and hitting the button to have the shiny blade pop out. Most of the time, the guy didn't even need to use the switchblade – just flicking it out sent the message: don't mess with this dude.

Obviously there was no better way to show the world you meant business than to brandish a switchblade. However, for over 50 years, manufacturing, selling, transporting, purchasing or possessing a switchblade knife was illegal in Wisconsin. Violators faced fines of up to \$10,000 and nine months in jail. So the closest thing I had was a switchblade comb.

But that all changed earlier this year. Wisconsin passed a law that legalized switchblades, bowie knives and other blades. The new measure also allows anyone who is not barred from possessing a firearm to also carry a concealed knife without a permit.

Governor Walker signed the bill into law at the annual state convention of the National Rifle Association and Wisconsin Firearm Owners, Ranges, Clubs, and Educators Inc., or FORCE, in Weston, Wisconsin, which is near Wausau. He explained that, "Wisconsin citizens have the fundamental right to defend themselves and feel safe and secure in their homes and we remain committed to protecting those rights."

Walker pointed to Wisconsin's long outdoor sporting history and the use of knives as part of that history. "When we talk about hunting, fishing, trapping, it's a big part of the State's heritage we want to continue to protect," he explained.

And despite their portrayal in the movies and on TV, switchblades are actually used by the good guys. Governor Walker elaborated, saying, "Part of the reason why I signed legislation today, that adds one more tool for public safety particularly for First Responders." For example, at the scene of an accident, emergency personnel may have one hand occupied by applying pressure to a victim's wound. Being able to open a switchblade with their free hand to cut away a harness, seatbelt or obstructive clothing would be invaluable.

Despite today's acrimonious political environment, the bill passed in the State house of representatives and senate without opposition. Even more surprising was the fact that it took less than a year to be passed.

The new law goes on to say that local governments cannot create knife regulations that are stricter than the state law. However, municipalities are able to enact bans in courthouses and other public buildings owned by local government.

Thanks to the new law, I'm in the market for a switchblade. If I do buy a new knife, I'm sure people will ask if I'll get rid of my switchblade comb. Of course, now that I'm going bald, I'll tell them that I'll never part with it.