

March 10, 2015

To: Members of the Connecticut House Committee on Environment

RE: HOUSE BILL 6955 – AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN

Knife Rights represents America's millions of knife owners, knifemakers, scrimshaw artists, knife retailers and suppliers to knifemakers and scrimshaw artists, many of whom are Connecticut citizens and residents and many of whom own legally acquired ivory or knives with ivory components. And, as it turns out, many also own a wide range of other items that include ivory, and so we represent these members' interests as well. We want to alert you that **the proposed ivory ban bill, HB 6955, will not save a single living elephant and will have a severe negative financial impact on many of your law-abiding citizens who own or work with ivory. HB 6955 is the worst kind of emotionally-driven "Feel Good – Do Bad" legislation that will only hurt Connecticut residents with no benefit to elephants.**

Knife Rights and all those we represent unequivocally support science-based conservation efforts that have proven successful in posting significant gains in elephant populations in Africa over the past few decades. **Knife Rights and those we represent unequivocally support practical and lawful efforts to defend elephants in the field from poachers as well as lawful enforcement activities that directly target the illegal black-market trade in ivory that have resulted in a REDUCTION in elephant poaching over the past three years. This proposed ivory ban accomplishes none of these effective and proven objectives.**

Poaching of African elephants is a serious problem that Knife Rights and all we represent abhor. On that we can all agree. However, as has been noted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on numerous occasions in the past, **the legal trade in decades-old ivory in this country is NOT the problem.**

HB 6955 is not supported by facts or science, or even by simple common sense, unlawfully punishing Connecticut's legal ivory owners. This bill flies in the face of the reality that there is no significant illegal ivory problem in the U.S. Studies by ETIS (the Elephant Trade Information System set up by CITES) indicate that virtually none of the ivory from elephants being poached in Africa today is coming to the U.S. ("African Elephant Summit Background Document 2013," pages 16-18). Another study by ETIS indicated that laws passed in the U.S. have little effect on elephant populations ("Martin Stiles Ivory Markets in the US," page 5). These same studies indicate that the U.S. is already the world leader in the fight against trafficking of illicit animal parts, out of 89 countries studied, and by a significant margin. Finally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, charged with enforcement of America's existing ivory import ban, in their September 2012 Fact Sheet states, **"we do not believe that there is a significant illegal ivory trade into this country."**

The huge increase in demand for ivory in China, which prompts continued poaching in Africa, has been triggered by the significantly increased buying power of China's citizens combined with their government's lax controls on black-market ivory. Nothing that penalizes owners of decades-old legal ivory in Connecticut will have any effect on that demand. Taken together with the studies referenced, clearly, this proposed ban is a hypocritical, ineffective and irrational solution in search of a problem in Connecticut.

Back to simple economics and common sense: When the black market price of raw ivory in China exceeds \$1,500 per pound (per numerous reports) and the price for perfectly legal and readily available decades-old ivory in the U.S. is \$250 per pound, few criminals are going to run the risk of trying to bring illegal ivory into the U.S., with its internationally recognized effective customs enforcement, when **they can sell poached ivory in China for six times**

the U.S. price with extremely lax to non-existent customs enforcement. Beyond that, **with readily available legal ivory in the U.S., there simply is no reason anyone in the U.S. needs to turn to the black market.**

This nation was founded on a respect for its citizen's rights, from the Declaration of Independence through the Constitution and our Bill of Rights and more than two centuries of legal precedent. The core nature of this country is that we are a country of laws, that even the unpopular have rights to be respected and that, above all, we defend individual rights and individual property rights.

However, HB 6955 ignores our widely acknowledged body of law, unfairly and unconstitutionally persecuting honest ivory owners who would find their investment in legally acquired ivory "taken" by government edict and made worthless, their livelihood stolen from them in some cases.

This effective "taking" of the heretofore legal private property of potentially tens of thousands of Connecticut ivory owners is a clear violation of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It is also an offense to longstanding American rights, freedoms and values of fairness and equity. **Ultimately the adverse impact on Connecticut citizens and residents will be in the millions of dollars and the state of Connecticut stands to lose millions of dollars more in lost commerce, taxes, and enforcement expense for no appreciable positive impact on the real problem, poaching in Africa which is supported by the illegal trade in black market ivory in Asia, principally in China.**

This proposed ivory ban would also disproportionately affect Connecticut's elderly, many of them veterans, who are the original owners of much of the hundreds of thousands of tons of legal pre-ban ivory in the U.S. that was initially brought into the country in the 1950s through the 1970s. It is this decades-old ivory that forms the basis for the legal trade in ivory in the U.S. Many of these older Americans turn to their investment in ivory, in its many forms, to help sustain them in their twilight years and provide a cushion for emergencies. Robbing these elderly citizens, many of whom fought for their country and its freedoms, and often bear the scars from that service, of their lifelong investment, to no good end, is particularly unjust.

There is not a shred of factual evidence to suggest that punishing Connecticut Ivory owners for their investment in perfectly legal decades-old ivory will have one iota of influence on the black market in illegal ivory that fuels poaching in Africa. It goes against all human experience to believe that this effort will do anything but adversely affect law-abiding Connecticut ivory owners. It will do nothing to change the cultural aspects of the illegal ivory trade in Asia and China. *It will not save a single living elephant.*

This misguided ivory ban is ill-conceived, offensive and most likely unconstitutional. Knife Rights urges you to vote against HB 6955, a bill that would unfairly penalize Connecticut's ivory owners for others' illegal and immoral activities that continue to threaten elephants, and which this proposed ivory ban does nothing to ameliorate.

Respectfully submitted,



Douglas S. Ritter
Chairman