

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and Members of the Environmental Committee:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak in favor of HB6955
My name is Eva Magnuszewski; I am an Alderwoman from the City of New Britain.
I am also on the Advisory Council for CT Votes for Animals.
I am here for the latter.

Today I took a vacation day from my full time job to speak to you about the importance of banning the sale of ivory and rhino horns in CT.

New York and New Jersey have already passed this landmark legislation.

~Chop Sticks, Ornaments, Hair pins, Pendants and Trinkets:
Did you know that these are some of the reasons that elephants are being killed in droves?
The questions I ask: Are these items necessary to live? Should they be made from ivory?

~ Rhinos are hunted and murdered because their horns are Status Symbols for the wealthy.
Countries like Vietnam and China use them supposed cures. No scientific medical evidence exists.

The ivory and rhino horn bans sweeping the nation come at a critical time for these vanishing and irreplaceable animal populations worldwide.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service reports that elephants are being poached faster than they can procreate
At this rate, elephants could become extinct in the wild in as little as 10 years.
An elephant is murdered every 15 minutes.

In 2011, one type of rhino known as the Western Black Rhino was declared extinct, by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.
That was 4 only years ago.
Poaching was identified as the main reason why.
Now only 5 species of rhinos remain and all 5 are listed on the ICUN's Red list of threatened species.
Savetherhino.org has the pictures and further information.

You might ask why are elephants and rhinos important to the planet or why should I care?
Elephants and rhinos are key species needed on the earth to protect ecosystems, biodiversity, and forests.

Banning ivory and rhino horn sales also combats the violent illegal wildlife trafficking industry that funds terrorism.

The ivory and rhino horn trade puts money in the hands of terrorist groups including Al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram.

They use the profits from slaughtering elephants and rhinos to buy weapons and inflict terror on innocent victims.

For those of you with a strong stomach please watch the Last Days Documentary from Kathryn Bigelow, the director of Zero Dark Thirty and the Hurt Locker. I can almost guarantee tears will flow.

Today I am proud to say, that not only CT has introduced ivory and rhino horn legislation but states including California, Vermont, Illinois, Massachusetts, Hawaii, Florida, Oklahoma, Virginia, Maryland, Washington State and Iowa have all introduced similar measures to end ivory and rhino horn trade in 2015.

Action is also underway to introduce ivory sales bans in Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Delaware and the District in Columbia

Wouldn't it be great if CT were the third state in the nation to pass this legislation?

I am blessed to have a 2 year old niece who absolutely loves all kinds of animals, her parent's two dogs, the fish in their aquariums, the deer and birds that come into their yard, my cat and all of her stuffed animal toys which are numerous. *(Pictures)*

The question from her that one day I do not want to answer is

"Auntie, why didn't you do anything to save the elephants and the rhinos?"

For those of you with children, step children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and younger cousins please consider how answering this question would make you feel.

In my elected official position- I cannot pass this important and urgent legislation but I can ask you to fill yourselves with the knowledge and empathy to pass this bill and urge your colleagues to do the same.

In closing: I want to thank you so much for your time, for listening and for raising this bill.

I know your time is important, your schedules are hectic and there are many worthwhile bills before you in 2015.

As Oprah once said "Unless you choose to do great things with it, it makes no difference how much you are rewarded or how much power you have."

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Environmental Committee: You have the power to do great things, you have the power to help two species not become extinct.