

Testimony Concerning [HB 6955](#)
Environment Committee 11 March 2015

Gregg Dancho

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of [HB 6955](#) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN.

I am asking you as a constituent, Zoo Director of the AZA Accredited Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo and institutional supporter of the Wildlife Conservation Society's 96 Elephants campaign to ask that you support [HB 6955](#) PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN in Connecticut.

Did you know you can buy ivory legally in the United States? Unbelievable, right? Many people think that was outlawed back in the 1980s. A Federal ban on selling new ivory objects has been in existence for decades. But new ivory can be easily sold as "antique" or pre-law. Which is almost undetectable from old, legally-harvested ivory. To the consumer a sticker stating that it is old legal ivory is enough proof for them. This has allowed a thriving market for ivory goods made from recently killed elephants.

The United States is among the largest markets in the world for ivory sales and its killing elephants. Ivory trade laws in the United States are complex and confusing, making it easy to manipulate the system and sell illegal ivory.

African elephants are being killed at an unprecedented rate as demand for ivory continues unabated. In 2012, some 35,000 African elephants, 96 per day, were killed for their ivory -- representing the worst mass slaughter of elephants since the international ivory trade was banned in 1989. African forest elephants in particular have been devastated by poaching and have declined by about 65 percent since 2002. At this rate, African forest elephants could effectively be extinct over the next decade.

The millions of dollars brought in by the slaughter and trafficking of wildlife help finance trade in illegal drugs and arms, which in turn fuels political instability,

organized crime, and terrorism. A kilo of ivory can sell for \$3,000 and these prospective profits have reportedly attracted terrorist groups

like the Lord's Resistance Army and the Janjaweed. By following the money trail it has become increasingly clear that ivory trafficking directly contributes to terrorism and funds atrocities against civilians. . Killing elephants for their tusks is not just about making carvings. Ivory money fuels terrorist groups that kill innocent people, are tied to the drugs and arms trade, and cause instability in nations all over the world.

The equation is alarmingly simple. Selling ivory equals dead elephants. And it's happening at a rate unmatched for decades – last year, an average of 96 elephants were killed every day in Africa. If it continues, forest elephants could be extinct within a generation.

I have had the distinct privilege to see Elephants and Rhinos in the wild. I have also witnessed the extreme measures that have been put in place by their home countries to try and protect them. In most cases this is a futile effort. The poachers are better equipped and armed than the ones set up to protect.

In the case of Rhino horn this has contributed to the demise of the Western black rhino. It has been declared extinct in the wild in 2011, with the primary cause identified as poaching for its horn. To have an animal of this size and magnificence become lost to this world due to human greed is simply not acceptable. All five remaining rhinos species are listed as threatened species.

Action needs to be taken now to stop the sale of all ivory and rhino horn in Connecticut if we hope to save these wild populations for future generations. Please support [HB 6955](#) and make a difference today.

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