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**To the members of the Environment Committee:**

You have a decision facing you now that is not about guns or politics. It is about fighting terrorism and protecting what will soon be endangered species: rhinos and elephants. New York and New Jersey have stepped up and done the right thing. Now it's your turn. **Vote YES to HB 6955 and ban the sale of ivory in Connecticut.**

***Poaching supplies the ivory trade and supports terrorism***

Environmental organizations have recently claimed that Al-Shabaab, the terrorist group behind the Kenyan Westgate shopping mall massacre, which killed at least 68 people, has been funding its activities through ivory and rhino poaching. According to the US International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF),

“Ivory and rhino horn are gaining popularity as a source of income for some of Africa’s most notorious armed groups, including Somalia’s al-Shabab, the Lord's Resistance Army (L.R.A.), and Darfur's janjaweed”.

The organization adds, “Wildlife products have become a substantial source of income for terrorist organizations in Africa.”

The increasing evidence linking illegal wildlife trafficking to terrorism prompted President Obama to describe the issue a major threat to national security. In July this year, the President issued an executive order to establish a presidential-level task force on wildlife trafficking. The task force has formed an advisory council to draw up a new strategy to clamp down on the criminal networks.

The plan, which was outlined by officials from the State Department, Justice Department and Interior Department, will also increase pressure on Asian countries to stop the buying and selling of illegal rhinoceros horns, elephant ivory and other items, which President Obama has called an “international crisis,” and will try to reduce demand for those items worldwide.<sup>1</sup> **You can help reduce demand.**

***Elephants and rhinos are at risk of extinction, changing the African ecosystem***

Both elephants and rhinos are considered “keystone species,” or ones that have a relatively large impact on their environment in relation to their actual population numbers. Elephants push over trees and stomp shrubby areas, keeping forests at bay, which would otherwise overtake African

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<sup>1</sup> Nixon, Ron, “Obama Administration Plans to Aggressively Target Wildlife Trafficking,” *The New York Times*, February 11, 2015

grasslands. Rhinos, like other grazing species, selectively browse on certain grass species, which leaves room for others that otherwise could not compete to move in and promotes a diverse mosaic of edible plants, which countless other African species depend on.<sup>2</sup>

“The ongoing slaughter of rhinos and elephants in Africa is driven by rising consumer demand here, and United States citizens are intimately involved in illegal trade both here and abroad,” said Daniel M. Ashe, the director of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

According to Mr. Nixon’s article in *The New York Times*:

*Trafficking in wildlife has decimated elephant and rhino populations in Africa. The latest figures from South Africa show that 1,215 rhinos were killed last year, up from a little more than 300 in 2010.*

*More than 100,000 elephants have been killed for ivory since 2010, according to a 2014 Colorado State University report. Rhino horns can fetch prices as high as \$30,000 a pound, and ivory can command prices as high as \$3,000 a pound.*

### ***IF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY HAVE STEPPED UP, CONNECTICUT SHOULD TOO!***

This summer, New Jersey and New York, two states that represent key ports of entry into the United States for consumer goods (and wildlife trafficking), passed laws to help stem the illegal trade in ivory and rhino horn.

On August 5, 2014, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie signed legislation prohibiting individuals from importing, selling or purchasing any ivory or rhinoceros horn products in the state. Assemblyman Raj Mukherji, the bill’s prime sponsor in the New Jersey Assembly, is quoted in the press release issued by the governor’s office: ““Given the role of our ports in wildlife trafficking and the rate at which the ivory trade is driving elephants and other endangered and threatened species toward extinction, these measures will directly contribute to protecting these magnificent species while chopping away at a major funding source for terrorists.””<sup>3</sup>

**STOP SUPPORTING TERRORISM. SAVE THE LIVES OF INNOCENT ANIMALS.  
PRESERVE THE NATURAL ECOSYSTEM OF AFRICA.**

**BAN THE SALE OF IVORY IN CONNECTICUT. SUPPORT HB6955!**

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> Nuwer, Rachel, “Here’s What Might Happen to Local Ecosystems If All The Rhinos Disappear,” *Smithsonian.com*, February 27, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Animal Welfare Institute, “New Jersey, New York Pass Laws to Ban Trade in Ivory and Rhino Horns,” *AWI Quarterly*, Fall 2014.

