

Testimony for Environment Committee on Raised H.B. No. 6955, An Act Prohibiting the Sale and Trade of Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn

March 11, 2015

I am a resident of Guilford. I am a volunteer for Connecticut Votes for Animals and am a citizen concerned about both abuse of animals and species extinction.

The magnitude of the problem we are discussing today is clear. More than 100,000 elephants in Africa were killed for ivory over a recent 3-year period. Wildlife experts estimate that 96 elephants a day are poached for illegal ivory trade. Statisticians estimate that elephants will be extinct within 20 years if the current level of poaching continues. All five remaining rhinoceros species are already considered threatened, yet during 2014 in South Africa alone over 1200 rhinos were killed by poachers, up from 300 in 2010.

So, what do we do about the problem? Consumer demand is supporting this ongoing slaughter of elephants and rhinos in Africa, and among countries, the United States is second only to China in having the largest ivory market. Recent legislation to halt the importation of ivory into this country has loopholes that still allow sales within states. Through bipartisan efforts, New York and New Jersey have enacted strict bans on the sale of almost all ivory products. Although the depletion of elephants and rhinos is a huge problem that needs to be addressed by many people in many countries, the least we can do here in Connecticut is to do our part and ban the sale of elephant ivory and rhino horn here. Their sale is entirely unnecessary, and it is a no-brainer for us to help stop the brutal slaying of these magnificent animals.

There has been growing and widespread unwillingness of people in this country to accept inhumane treatment of animals. A recent statewide poll in California found that voters of both parties support by a margin of more than 10-to-1 closing the state's loophole in the ban on ivory sales and ending rhino horn trade. Scientific studies have shown elephants to have personal qualities greatly admired by most humans, as they are highly intelligent, social animals who demonstrate strong family bonds and nurturing skills.

Banning the sale and trade of ivory and rhinoceros horn would be applauded by the vast majority of your constituents. I personally do not see how anyone could in good conscience oppose this legislation.

Thank you.

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Guilford