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AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY . . . Raised Bill No. 6955
January session, 2015 Referred to Committee on ENVIRONMENT

Thank you for allowing me to speak here today.

My wife and I are small business owners who produce and sell high dollar custom pool cues and have done so here in Connecticut for over 25 years. I am an ivory collector as well.

This ivory ban will do much to harm us on all levels. A complete ban will hurt our company. As small business owners we contribute to the local economy. We will no longer be able to sell our products, pay taxes, continue to pay tuition for our son in college here in Connecticut or donate to both local and national charities; such as the pool cue we designed, constructed and donated to The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Ashford, Connecticut – that cue raised over \$30,000.00 at auction and yes, it had legally obtained elephant ivory in its construction – images of this work of art are posted on our website www.pfdstudios.com.

This proposed ban will take away our ability to earn a living in the niche market we have created over the past 25 years as makers of some of the most unusual and artistic works in the billiard industry. Needless-to-say, all the ivory we use has always been legally obtained and documented from sources well known to the Federal Department of Fish & Wildlife Service - none is poached ivory!

This nation is a closed market for Ivory. We have been a closed market since the original import ban went into effect in 1989. The United States is not contributing to elephant poaching in any meaningful way because current laws in the U.S. are working. When the 1989 ban on exporting and importing African ivory went into place, it allowed the domestic trade of ivory that was already in the United States (“pre-ban ivory”) to continue. The export limitations discouraged big businesses from using ivory in products, but small businesses have continued to make, repair, embellish and trade pre ban ivory along with antique ivory. People who deal regularly with ivory are very aware of the regulatory structures, as reflected in the small number of seizures and tiny amounts of illegal ivory confiscated in the United States in recent years from dealers or businesses. Also, pricing confirms the stability of ivory trade in the United States. Domestically, the cost of raw ivory has been around \$250 per pound, whereas in China, where illegal ivory trade flourishes, ivory can cost as much as \$1500 per pound. Given the price discrepancy, it is obvious where illegal poachers will peddle their ivory.

The success the U.S. has had in keeping poached ivory out of its domestic market is proof that we do not need more laws on the books. Laws that make it illegal to sell that which is currently legal, **LAWS WHICH WILL TARGET INNOCENT U.S. CITIZENS, AND NOT POACHERS OR IMPORTERS** of the contraband ivory. There are well over 3000 small businesses in the United States that use, embellish, repair, restore, or provide services involving ivory. Guitar and banjo repair shops, piano restorers and movers, silversmiths, religious products dealers, antique dealers, tool and knife makers, gunsmiths, engravers, jewelers, art galleries, and yes, cuemakers – all of these entities will be penalized by denying them materials for their trade or products that they rely upon and have nothing to do with elephant poaching in Africa.

On the consumer side, millions of people who own items that contain ivory will be severely limited with what they can do with it. Musicians will not be able to repair or refurbish their instruments. Art

collectors, from high end Netsuke collectors to people trading collectibles in local markets , will see the value of their collections plummet to \$0. People who lose family members will have difficulty resolving estates. Cultural and religious items from statues to rosary beads will become contraband. All of these items made from ivory taken from elephants that died decades if not generations ago will drop out of the legal stream of commerce without preventing a single elephant from dying in Africa.

The bill as proposed paints such a broad brush as to defy logic. Mammoth tusk represents a small but reasonable alternative to ivory. The mammoth has been extinct for over 10,000 years, yet the bill would have it become illegal. How will banning mammoth tusk help save an elephant or any other creature named in the proposed legislation?

In summary, the proposed legislation amounts to nothing more than constructive confiscation. As written, this legislation makes it impossible to sell, barter, trade or gift any current legally owned property that contains ANY ivory. We fail to see how this will save one single African elephant, now or in the future. We have well established and highly restrictive existing laws. Adding more laws is not better. Rigorous enforcement of the existing laws is appropriate and should be sufficient.

You are all well intended and well meaning individuals. And we applaud your desire to help save the African elephant from poachers. However, the proposed legislation will have a serious negative impact on the small business owners and citizens of Connecticut, while at the same time doing nothing to help solve the actual problem. Our business and the value of our product intrinsically involves the use of ivory. Denying us access to this legally obtained material significantly impacts our future. Our buyers and collectors who have spent significant sums of money, as part of their investments for the future, will now see that value go to zero and once that happens you have effectively put us out of business.

One parting thought...interestingly enough, the Virginia Senate Committee for Courts of Justice recently voted 13-0 to strike the recently introduced Virginia State Ivory Ban bill, SB 1215, at the request of sponsor Senator Adam Ebbin (D-30). Ebbin made the request after an alliance of organizations opposed to the bill helped make it clear to the committee members that it was terribly problematic for honest, law-abiding Virginians, stealing millions in value from them and that it would not save a single living elephant in Africa.