



# Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

March 10, 2015

Environmental Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200  
Hartford, CT 06106

To the Committee:

On behalf of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art I am writing in opposition to H.B. No. 6955 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN. The implementation of a complete ban on the commercial trade in ivory would greatly hinder the Wadsworth Atheneum's ability to protect, conserve, display, and share with the public the nearly 1,000 works of art containing ivory in the Museum's permanent collection. To this date, the Wadsworth Atheneum has consistently complied with CITES and national laws designed to protect endangered and threatened species, such as the Endangered Species Act, which for decades have allowed American museums to responsibly acquire, exhibit and make direct loans of legally acquired artwork containing elements of ivory, and other endangered or threatened species.

With this ban in place, however, the Wadsworth Atheneum would not be able to acquire important artworks made with or from ivory nor would the institution be permitted to participate in international exhibitions and loans with foreign lenders. International audiences could not experience or be educated from artistically and historically important works in ivory from the Wadsworth Atheneum's Collection, such as firearms manufacturer Samuel Colt's famed Texas Holster pistol, c. 1838, with its ivory grips and mother-of-pearl inlay; or the extensive collection of portrait miniatures with likenesses of Revolutionary Era heroes including Generals Israel Putnam and William Hart, as well as the Museum's founder, Daniel Wadsworth. Nor could works made abroad be reunited in exhibitions with artworks from their country of origin, including the Museum's recent acquisition of a covered cup from Augsburg, Germany, c. 1670-74, carved with figures and animals of the New World.

The Wadsworth Atheneum supports the position of the American Association of Museum Directors in its recommendation to modify the ban on commercial trade ivory. These recommendations urge Federal and State governments to allow museums to borrow and lend antique ivory to exhibitions in and outside of the United States, as well as acquire ivory through bequests, donations, and purchases. In addition, the Wadsworth Atheneum implores the Committee to redefine "antique" to worked ivory created prior to February 26, 1976 and raw ivory created prior to February 26, 1976 if the museum substantiates to Fish & Wildlife that the ivory has artistic or historic merit; or any other listed endangered species, as contemplated under the Endangered Species Act. In conjunction, museums should be allowed to certify that an object is antique without the necessity of an appraisal or other independent proof.

On behalf of the Wadsworth Atheneum, I greatly appreciate your consideration of these modifications to H.B. No. 6955 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN.

Sincerely yours,

Susan L. Talbott  
Director and CEO