

Spencer Marks, Ltd.

Fine Antique & 20th Century Silver

www.spencermarks.com

11 March 2015

RE: H.B. No. 6955

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN

Dear Committee Members:

Mark and I have been selling antique and 20th century silver for nearly 30 years. We have been selling at shows in Connecticut to Connecticut clients for the same period. Our clients include museums such as the Yale University Art Gallery, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and many private collectors both important and casual. Our work is to preserve our art and our cultural heritage by finding it a new home.

We support your efforts to help preserve the world-wide elephant population. However, as written, the current legislation will have serious unintended consequences. I would like to address two areas of concern:

- 1) Objects have lives. Ivory has been used as an accessory to silver for centuries, most commonly as insulators on coffee and tea pot handles but also to accessorize and embellish some of the finest pieces. These objects were created by some of our nation's finest artisans and are a legacy to us.

My job is to find these pieces happy new homes when the time has come, whether by an owner's economic need, indifference or death. Without a legal market, these pieces lose their legitimate value. Without value, most go away. In the case of silver, it is usually melted – often at 10% or 20% of its value.

Together, we must try to preserve these objects whose only crimes are to be wonderful pieces of art and cultural legacies left to us by our forebearers. Connecticut has a rich history of silversmithing and pieces made here will die prematurely.

- 2) Your constituents will suffer economic loss from this bill. Without a market, there will be no real value in many of their collected assets. In the case of silver, it will likely be melted at 10 or 20 cents on the dollar. The negative economic impact will be in the tens or possibly hundreds of millions. Surveys indicate about 25% of the population collects something.

We purchase from many collectors for many reasons. Sometimes we buy from Connecticut collectors because of economic hardship. Sometimes as part of planned selling in retirement. Sometimes a collector wants to help with a grandchild's education. This bill could devastate their savings.

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The economic effects will be uneven, it is your middle class constituent with the \$5,000.00 silver tea set who would suffer the most. Possibly it is you, your parents, your children or other relatives who will face the greatest hardship.

Please include as broad an antique exemption as possible in this bill for elephant ivory. Many fine pieces were still using ivory accessories through the art deco period of the 1930's, so I would argue for a 1940 or 1950 cutoff rather than the typical 100 year old definition. However, any exemption would improve upon the current proposed legislation.

The fewer the unintended consequences of the legislation, the greater the chances for success and the achievement of our common goal of saving the lives of elephants.

I have attached a few images which I hope will help illustrate my points.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Spencer Gordon

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This outstanding entrée server with ivory handles was made in Wallingford, CT by the Barbour Silver Company, a division of the International Silver Company, c. 1900. This could not be sold in the state where it was made.

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This exceptional tea and coffee service was made by Tiffany & Co in 1879. It is an extraordinary example of American aesthetic movement silver and would be illegal to sell.

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Erik Magnussen examining an art deco silver and ivory covered compote he made for Gorham in 1926 that is now in the collection of the Dallas Museum of Art. Magnussen's pieces are very rare and are some of the finest American art deco silver. What would happen to something similar to this?

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