

Arthur S. Liverant
43 School Road
Colchester, CT 06415

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Thank you Chairman Albis, Chairman Kennedy and members of the esteemed Environment Committee.

I would like to address Bill Number 5578, an act Prohibiting the Sale and Trade of Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn. I will state that I unequivocally oppose passage of this bill, as I have opposed previous proposed bills regarding this very important issue.

Today, however, I will approach my discussion from another point of view. With respect to the Environment Committee, and other individuals interested in saving endangered animal species, I must state that the proposed legislation approaches the problem from the wrong perspective. Making criminals of, and prosecuting law abiding citizens of Connecticut and the United States because they possess articles of ivory punishes the wrong individuals. The true criminals are the poachers and the government officials who allow these atrocities to continue without serious penalty, or no penalty whatsoever.

On April 30, 1789, General George Washington was inaugurated as our first President. On that occasion, every woman who attended the celebratory ball was given a fan, made in Paris. It had an ivory frame, and when it was opened, it displayed a likeness of Washington in profile. Do you honestly believe that if this is a family heirloom, passed down through generations, it should be made valueless, or worse, destroyed?

If Bill Number 5578 is passed, the money spent to combat this issue will be sorely misguided. The expense and administrative effort would overload our state budget which is already in serious deficit spending and would divert our state workers from projects that even today are challenged.

Today, I offer my challenge to the Environment Committee to begin to pursue the true criminals, and attack the problem at the point of the crime. Should this esteemed Committee consider a movement to assist the African and Asian countries where the laws against the killing of elephants, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, walrus, whales and narwhals are being ignored, the money and efforts will be spent more efficiently and effectively.

Should the Environment Committee make the effort to start the opposition here, in these halls, perhaps Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey and others

will see the light and join forces with Connecticut. Perhaps it could become a national issue to help the countries in need, rather than pursuing the path of punishing law abiding American citizens.

The great anthropologist, Margaret Meade, taught us “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” I urge this esteemed body of diligent legislators to start the movement, and not be followers. The American public are not the criminals. Let’s pursue the real offenders.

Legislators, please consider my suggestion. You could make the difference, and perhaps save another species from extinction.

Sincerely,

Arthur S. Liverant