

Bill Katz
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March 10, 2016

Dear Co-chair Kennedy, Co-chair Albis and honorable members of the Environment Committee:

Last year on June 19, the US Fish & Wildlife Service headed by Dan Ash, held an ivory crush in Times Square in New York. In opening remarks, Dan Ash cited Connecticut as the epicenter of much of the elephant poaching and subsequent ivory importation from Africa that lasted for up to 100 years from the 19th century into the 20th century.

Those of us throughout the world who struggle to end poaching of elephants and rhinos recognizes Connecticut as the place that fostered this terrible plague. It is only fitting that we in Connecticut tell world through an in-state ban on ivory and rhino horn, that we desire to right a terrible historic wrong.

Poaching has become so pervasive today that it is estimated there will be no remaining wild elephants and rhinos within some of our lifetimes.

I would like to express a few quotes from former Hartford Courant writers, Anne Farrow, Joel Lang and Jennifer Frank's book titled, "Complicity."

"Two little Connecticut River towns helped to produce music for the middle class, at a cost of as many as 2 million African lives, sacrificed to harvest elephant ivory."

"Ivory was good for New England and for America's piano-making empire but it was a long nightmare for African people and Africa's elephants."

"It is the custom to buy a tooth of ivory and a slave with it to carry it to the sea shore."

"During the second half of the 19th century and well into the 20th, 75% of the ivory exported from Zanzibar, went to two piano-key manufacturing companies in Connecticut."

I know you have read testimony from the Wadsworth that fear their own collections of ivory will be jeopardized. But exclusions are written into this legislation. Narrow-minded individuals will always create an argument in the face of such protections. Our own governor told me not once but twice that he is not in favor of any state ivory ban. As he said to me, "I have ivory in my house." I tried explaining to him that exclusions are written in to protect antique ivory. And just a side note, Prince William of England is on record as stating that he believes the royal collection of ivory should be destroyed.

But we are not asking for the destruction of old ivory. We only want to send a message to the world and through this ban, we want to end trafficking of newly acquired elephant ivory and rhino horn from entering the marketplace of Connecticut.

Please pass HB 5578 so that it will be debate and hopefully, passed.

Thank you.

Signed: Bill Katz