

March 8, 2016

**To: Members of the Connecticut Environment Committee**

**RE: Opposition to HB 5578**

Knife Rights represents America's millions of knife owners, knifemakers, scrimshaw artists, knife retailers and suppliers to knifemakers and scrimshaw artists, many of whom are your Connecticut constituents and residents and many of whom own legally acquired ivory and mammoth ivory or knives with components made of these materials. And, as it turns out, many also own a wide range of other items that include ivory and mammoth ivory, and so we represent these members' interests as well.

We want to alert you that HB 5578 will not save a single living elephant and will have a severe negative financial impact on many of your law-abiding citizens who own items originally crafted with parts from these animals and lawfully imported decades ago and lawfully purchased. HB 5578 is simply a radical anti-hunting measure masquerading as a wildlife conservation measure. HB 5578 is the worst kind of emotionally-driven "Feel Good – Do Bad" legislation that will only hurt Connecticut residents with not only no benefit to the endangered and threatened animals, but potentially adverse consequences for many successful wildlife conservation efforts.

The proponents of this bill have continually misrepresented facts and data to paint a highly distorted picture of the status of the illegal ivory trade both in the U.S. and worldwide, the status of poaching in Africa and the likely expected results of passage of such bills. Attached please find a document with attached references from our associates at the Elephant Protection Association which directly debunks the most common misrepresentations and falsehoods being presented by bill proponents. The truth and reality is far different, and more encouraging, than the misleading information you are being supplied with by proponents whose agenda does not align with protection of these species.

These misrepresentations and falsehoods covered include: the United States is NOT the second largest market for illegal ivory, the United States DOES NOT import significant amounts of illegal ivory; funding of international terrorism through illegal ivory is GROSSLY MISREPRESENTED; the most inconvenient fact that Ivory Ban Proponents will never mention is that the threat to elephants and CLAIMS OF IMMINENT EXTINCTION ARE GROSSLY EXAGGERATED. I urge you to review the attachments and supporting documentation.

Knife Rights and all those we represent abhor the poaching and illegal trade of endangered and threatened species and we support science-based wildlife conservation efforts, including managed hunting, that have proven successful in posting significant gains in the majority of endangered and threatened species populations over the past few decades. For example, while elephants and rhinos are threatened in some parts of Africa, where managed hunting has been allowed the populations have flourished. We unequivocally support practical and lawful efforts to defend endangered and threatened species in the field as well as lawful enforcement activities that directly target illegal black-market trade in endangered and threatened species. HB 5578 accomplishes none of these effective and proven objectives.

While this bill would not directly prohibit hunts in Africa that are legal under international, federal and individual African country law, it would criminalize hunters returning to Connecticut with legal trophies. Worse, it steals millions of dollars in value from thousands who have previously hunted and their heirs who possess trophies from a legal hunt and hundreds of thousands more Connecticut residents who own lawfully imported and purchased items produced from parts of these endangered and threatened animals and which were legally imported, typically decades ago.

**Knife Rights, Inc.**

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This bill also bans trade in 10,000-year-old Mammoth Ivory, which just goes to show how absurd it is. Tons of Mammoth Ivory is collected every year by Native Americans in Alaska along the riverbanks and on the beaches, where the tusks fall out of the banks due to erosion. This Mammoth Ivory is one of their few sources of income. In addition, gold miners find tusks in their pursuit of gold in Alaska. No archeological sites are disturbed or "robbed." This natural material becomes exposed by nature and mining and if it is not collected it cracks, deteriorates and crumbles into gravel and soil within a few years and is lost forever. The only way to preserve this precious prehistoric material is to allow it to be collected, bought and sold. It is easily distinguishable from elephant ivory and is legal to ship all over the world.

This nation was founded on a respect for its citizen's rights, from the Declaration of Independence through the Constitution and our Bill of Rights and more than two centuries of legal precedent. The core nature of this country is that we are a country of laws, that even the unpopular have rights to be respected and that, above all, we defend individual rights and individual property rights.

However, HB 5578 ignores our widely acknowledged body of law, unfairly and unconstitutionally persecuting honest and law-abiding owners of products made from the parts of these animals who would find their investment in legally acquired objects "taken" by government edict and made worthless, their livelihood stolen from them in some cases.

This effective "taking" of the heretofore legal private property of potentially tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of Connecticuters is a clear violation of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It is also an offense to longstanding American rights, freedoms and values of fairness and equity. Ultimately the adverse impact on Hawaii citizens and residents will be in the millions of dollars and the state of Connecticut stands to lose millions of dollars more in lost commerce, taxes, and enforcement expense for no appreciable positive impact on the real problem, poaching and the illegal black market trade in threatened and endangered animals.

This proposed ivory ban would also disproportionately affect Connecticut's elderly, many of them veterans, who are the original owners of much of the hundreds of thousands of tons of legal pre-ban ivory in the U.S. that was initially brought into the country in the 1950s through the 1970s. It is this decades-old ivory that forms the basis for the legal trade in ivory in the U.S. Many of these older Americans turn to their investment in ivory, in its many forms, to help sustain them in their twilight years and provide a cushion for emergencies. Robbing these elderly citizens, many of whom fought for their country and its freedoms, and often bear the scars from that service, of their lifelong investment, to no good end, is particularly unjust.

There is not a shred of factual evidence to suggest that punishing Connecticuters for their investment in perfectly legal decades-old objects made from these animals will have one iota of influence on the black market. It goes against all human experience to believe that this effort will do anything but adversely affect law-abiding Connecticuters and the state of Connecticut.

This misguided ban is ill-conceived, offensive and most likely unconstitutional. Knife Rights urges you to vote against HB 5578.

Respectfully submitted,



Douglas S. Ritter  
Chairman

Attachment: Elephant Protection Association Ivory Ban Proponent Misrepresentations Rebutted