

First of all, I support the notion of measures designed to make ivory poaching and related big game hunting unprofitable and illegal going forward. This is a pastime whose time has come and gone in a world of more constrained resources and (hopefully) more humane intentions.

Second, I am not an ivory collector and have no vested interest other than the points I will make below.

However, I want to be very clear that I do NOT support the provisions involving the destruction of objects that have been manufactured in the past. Whether these have sentimental, heirloom or historical value, I find this measure excessive and unenforceable as a practical matter and deplorable as a matter of policy. As far as personal objects with this material is concerned, it is a gross over-reach of government power to make it illegal to possess those articles that were accumulated in good faith when this was not even an issue. Regarding items in publicly visible collections such as museums, the historical value and artistry transcends the materials that comprise the object. Deprive the world of the object, you are not only removing the material in question from view but also the vision and craft of the artist. Enforceability seems ludicrous unless the provision also includes an “ivory police” and an investigation process that strikes me, as a taxpayer, as a misuse of public resources.

All the foregoing is bad enough, but the policy implications are even more disturbing. The retroactive over-reach noted above seems a foolish if you want an otherwise noble impulse to be taken seriously. Of more concern is the notion that we must now sacrifice artifacts of any kind to a lunatic orthodoxy. This is reminiscent of the cultural atrocities perpetrated by the Taliban at Bamiyan and ISIS in Palmyra. Hardly a model for us to follow in Connecticut. Second, given all the other issues facing the state (and the nation, for that matter) I find it beyond comprehension that any part of our state government is wasting time on a piece of legislation with this kind of inflammatory provision. If the perpetrators of this bill are counting on the electorate to not pay attention, that has clearly been an error given the response of many of my friends, neighbors and associates. Third, the all-or-nothing nature of the proposed legislation seems characteristic of a political process that has become so extreme as to forestall any reasoned compromise. This is what has hamstrung the Federal government and has contributed to the rise of a polity so polarized that it may be hard to vote for anyone in November without deep and abiding reservations.

I close by saying that I will have those same deep and abiding reservations about anyone who votes in favor of such a bill and will act upon those reservations the next time I am at the ballot box.

Sincerely,

John Wheat