

Mr. Chairman and honored Members of the Environment Committee:

I am writing to urge passage of a bill banning the sale of ivory in Connecticut. We all know the statistics: 30,000 or more African elephants slaughtered every year through illegal poaching. Their forced march to extinction in the wild is being driven at an accelerating pace. Countries whose wild elephant populations, just a generation ago, numbered in the tens or hundreds of thousands are now looking at populations in the hundreds or low thousands.

From the website bloodyivory.org we read the following:

"In 1970 my country was the home to 70,000 elephants. Today as the result of poaching, and primarily significant transboundary poaching, the wildlife law enforcement officers are fighting to protect less than 200 individual survivors. We are really in a situation of crisis and I appeal to the international community to support the range States and protect this charismatic animal."

Jean-Baptiste Mamang-Kanga, Director of Fauna and Protected Areas, Central African Republic.

It might be easy to think that we are half a world away and that here in Connecticut we can do little to avert the coming tragedy. But that is not so. State legislatures can play a vital and effective role if they will act together. and act now! Elephants and rhinos are being poached because there is demand for their tusks and horns. Banning the sale of ivory and rhino horns in our state diminishes demand and will eventually make a significant difference.

Experts in the field know this. Ian Redmond OBE Wildlife Biologist and Ambassador for the UNEP Convention on Migratory Species has said, "Banning the ivory trade has been the single-most effective and economical way to slow the loss of elephants across their whole range... "

There is also great human tragedy linked to the ivory trade. It has long been known that organized crime and terror groups have funded and directly carried out poaching. This is well documented in a detailed article published by National Geographic, August 12, 2015. "How Killing Elephants Finances Terror in Africa".

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/tracking-ivory/article.html>

Sometimes we must enact laws because it is in our collective self interest to do so. Such is the case with Bill 5578. We have learned by sad experience that terrorist and other criminal activities on the other side of the world have real world impacts on us here in Connecticut. Closing our borders to the marketing of ivory and rhino horns deals a financial blow to illegal organizations. As we exercise leadership in this matter other states and even countries will follow. What might appear to be a symbolic measure at first will rapidly develop real teeth. It will make a difference.

Sometimes we must pass laws to protect and preserve the treasures of our planet for future generations. As I write this letter I am visiting my 7 year old granddaughter in Florida. As all children she is full of wonder and delight as she learns about the world around her. Yet I worry about the type of world that my generation will leave for her children. Will I have to tell my great grand children that the great elephants they see in the zoo *USED* to roam free in great herds? Or will I be able to happily say that in my generation we acted decisively to ensure these great creatures were preserved so that my posterity might continue to enjoy and marvel at their lives?

We are at a crossroads. Please make sure that this bill makes it out of committee and is voted upon by the full legislature. Sadly, in the year time since this committee last considered an anti ivory trafficking bill, another 30,000 elephants were needlessly, wastefully killed.

This year, let us please stop being part of the problem...and exercise leadership in implementing a workable solution.

Please move this bill through committee and onto the legislature for a vote.

Sincerely,

Larry Athay
Essex