



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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***March 11, 2016 Testimony by Representative Mitch Bolinsky
Before the Environment Committee in Opposition to RAISED HB 5578:
AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN***

My thanks to the Honorable Co-Chairs, Senator Kennedy and Representative Albis; Vice Chairs Senator Moore and Representative Arconti; Ranking Members Senator Chapin and Representative Shaban; and the entire Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my strong opposition to Raised Bill 5578: *AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN*.

Simply put, there is no need for this piece of legislation in Connecticut. In 2014, President Obama signed an Executive Order augmenting Federal Regulations banning the sale of all ivory and rhinoceros horn under 100-years old and requiring independent documentation identifying antiques. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service already has its own very stringent and expensive protections to prevent the sale of any undocumented antique object containing ivory or rhinoceros horn.

HB 5578 only piles on and threatens Connecticut's Antiques Trade, infringes on the property rights of its citizens, particularly long-time, senior residents, most of whom do not even know that we're here today, talking about making their family heirlooms and personal antique possessions illegal.

Those who know what we're doing here, have contacted many of us or submitted testimony. They tell me that, should we actually pass this over-reaching law, they will consider retiring out of state. Don't we already have enough of an outward migration problem?

These are antiques. Outlawing them will not bring back a single majestic elephant or rhino. In fact, an act as far-reaching as this could actually have the opposite effect, creating a black market that creates new opportunity for the very poachers we'd all like to see eliminated.

The unintended consequences of this bill will rain permanent and catastrophic damage to a sensitive, yet significant sector of our economy. Like many businesses in these post-recession times, Connecticut's Antiques dealers are struggling. We need them to be viable in today's economy. There are an estimated 871 active retail Antiques dealers in Connecticut, employing thousands of Connecticut taxpayers and generating upwards of \$2.5-billion in annual, taxable revenue. This does not include distributors and wholesalers, nor the goods and services consumed by these businesses, or the transportation of goods. What happens to these thousands of taxpayers when we drive an antique dagger through their hearts?

Finally, HB 5578 gives the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, a state agency with limited resources, sweeping powers to seize, destroy and prosecute. It allows DEEP to pay "bounties" up to \$500 to antiques whistleblowers, leaving the burden of proof on the accused. Is this due process?

Remember, this material was the “plastic of centuries past”. Even antique clocks may have bits of ivory in their movements, not visible but there. Silver tea sets and flatware may contain small inserts as insulators, keeping pieces cool to the touch in the olden days. Pianos, old pool tables, jewelry box drawer-pulls. Antique Ivory is everywhere and confiscating family heirlooms does not save a single animal.

Thank you for your time and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.
Respectfully,

Representative Mitch Bolinsky