

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 5578 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE AND TRADE OF IVORY AND RHINOCEROS HORN

Submitted by Rosamund Downing,
District Leader (2nd Congressional District, CT), Humane Society of the United States
39 Moss St.
Pawcatuck, CT. 06379
860-599-5220

Dear Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-Chair Albis, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

I vote, and this issue is important to me. As a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, I am gravely concerned about the plight of wild elephants and rhinos. Like our neighbors in New York and New Jersey, CT needs to adopt stricter sanctions against the importation and trade of all elephant ivory and rhino horn. Current federal laws are insufficient to stop the trade of poached elephant ivory because they contain numerous loopholes. The federal laws/regulations are so complicated that consumer confusion is inevitable. For example, without DNA testing it is nearly impossible to distinguish between “antique” ivory and doctored “new” ivory. Due to the complexity of this issue, the USFWS supports statewide bans – citing the need to address illegal wildlife trade on multiple levels.

Between 2010 and 2012, at least 100,000 African elephants were slaughtered for their tusks. Currently, it is projected that 96 elephants A DAY are poached in South Africa alone, and 1,215 rhinos were killed there in 2014*. The gruesome reality is that elephants are often pursued by helicopters and then shot with military grade weapons. Sometimes these animals are still alive when their faces are cut off in order to retrieve the tusks! Mothers are slaughtered and their babies are left orphans – thus jeopardizing the next generation. At current levels of poaching, elephants in the wild will be extinct within 20 years. Rhinos are also in trouble. All five rhino species are facing extinction.

Additionally, illegal poaching is a national security issue - with much of the profit from this trade going to terrorist organizations. Illegal wildlife trade is the fourth most lucrative criminal endeavor internationally (\$8-10 billion annually). Sadly, over 1000 park rangers have been killed by poachers in the line of duty.

Globally, the U.S. is second only to China as the largest market for poached ivory. HB 5578 is necessary to stop the movement of this horrific commodity within our state and beyond. As other New England states ban the trade/sale of ivory and rhino horn, I fear that CT will become a “safe haven” for this illicit activity if HB 5578 is not passed.

Extinct is FOREVER. A ban on the sale and trade of ivory and rhino horn will discourage illegal trafficking by eliminating the markets and the profits from this grotesque business. CT must do what is necessary to ensure that elephants and rhinos continue to exist for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

*South African Department of Environmental Affairs