

Dear Environmental Committee Member,

On behalf of *The Art and Antique Dealers League of America*, I am writing to ask you to oppose and reject HB 5578, being considered by your committee.

Ivory has been used by mankind since antiquity. The works of art created from the elephant tusk are extraordinary cultural objects, many of which are today in museum and private collections worldwide. Americans have been collecting antique ivory objects since the 19th century and there are millions of examples in the United States. Many lost masterpieces are believed to have come to America during WWI and WWII. Some of those important works of art may be sitting in a basement somewhere in Connecticut.

Please consider that not all ivory objects have been the result of a killed elephant; historically, most ivory was obtained by artisans from elephants who died natural deaths. Do not believe the falsehoods claimed by wildlife NGO groups that nobody can tell the difference between old and new ivory - that is just not true. They are not antique experts, and those people who are recognized experts in this field ought to be consulted before irrational laws are passed. Moreover, Federal law permits free movement and trade in antique ivory.

Americans who collect or trade in antique ivory have not, nor do they presently, contribute to the poaching crisis occurring in Africa; this problem has been caused by countries like China, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Why would anyone want to make a criminal of an American citizen who never killed an elephant? More importantly, how can a law in Connecticut have any substantive effect on a problem happening 8000 miles away? Do not pass a law just to make a symbolic statement and don't put antique ivory in the same class as heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine.

I implore your committee to separate the forest from the trees in this situation and strongly consider if penalizing or jailing a citizen of Connecticut for possessing cultural materials and artifacts is going to have any beneficial effect on the poaching crisis. New York and New Jersey passed draconian laws well over a year ago on the basis that those states were hubs for illegal ivory; if that was the case, they why is the poaching still going on - 96 elephants a day? We all now see that they really do not contribute at all to this problem, and lawmakers were duped into believing a false narrative perpetuated by NGO groups without any proof. Have there been some bad actors, absolutely, but there are criminals in every field, and that is not a reason to paint with a broad brush and criminalize everyone. Trade in legal antique ivory is a venerable aspect to the antique industry - don't destroy it.

Thank you for considering the viewpoint of the purveyors of genuine antique works of art containing ivory.

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**European Decorative Arts Co.**