

March 4, 2016

Brooklyn, Connecticut

Co-Chairs Sen. Kennedy and Rep. Albis

Vice Chairs Sen. Moore and Rep. Arconti

Ranking Members Sen. Chapin and Rep. Shaban

Honorable Members of the Environment Committee

I write today to echo the public testimony of many distinguished Connecticut artisans, musicians, cultural artifact experts, preservationists, museum directors, students of the arts and small businessmen who strongly support efforts that can be taken to reduce and eliminate the senseless slaughter of endangered species including the “big five African species” but who accurately point out errors and oversights in Raised SB227 that are not constructive in supporting the above objective. So many sound reasons to defeat this bill and send it back for revision have been cited that I will only mention a few important points that highlight illogical provisions of the Raised Bill:

The federal CITES act of 1975 and numerous other federal laws make clear that possession and sale within the US of worked ivory that can be documented as being in the US prior to 1974 are legal activities. Should Connecticut enact legislation in conflict with federal law?

Should this Bill be enacted confiscating of personal property under its provisions would put Connecticut squarely in conflict with Supreme Court rulings related to unconstitutional takings without compensation. Expensive and protracted court actions would be difficult to explain or defend in a state that needs to reduce expenses.

As written the Bill would make illegal the possession or trade in articles adorned with ancient woolly mammoth ivory. What effect will this have on illegal trade in endangered species?

As is the case with many Bills, the cost of establishing and enforcing the proposal seems to be lacking.

One illogical consequence of the proposal would be to make illegal the possession of a piano, owing to the ivory keys of the instrument. Surely a little additional thought may allow rewriting to eliminate such blatant overreach.

Of greatest concern to me, as a past President of the Manchester Pipe Band, is the possibility that possession or sale of a valuable musical instrument embellished with a few grams of legal elephant ivory would become illegal acts that would threaten the cultural heritage of Celtic nations.

Please attend to the public testimony submitted and do not allow this Bill to move forward.

Jeffrey B. Otto