

March 3, 2016

Via Email: envtestimony@cga.ct.gov



Connecticut State Joint Committee on Environment
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Safari Club International's Comments on Senate Bill 227, Cecil's Law

Dear Senators and Representatives,

Safari Club International (SCI) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments for Senate Bill 227 (S. 277) and respectfully urges you to oppose this legislation. SCI and its members support punishing those who illegally kill wildlife and believe such individuals should be penalized to the full extent of the law. However, the solution to poaching will never be found in proposals that punish law-abiding citizens. Instead, Connecticut should look for strategies that combat those who intentionally violate the laws pertaining to the take of animals.

SCI understands the desire to conserve wildlife, but this piece of legislation is based on propaganda rather than fact. Sound scientific principles, not the hyperbole and emotionalism of anti-hunters, should provide the foundation for laws that affect the management and conservation of wildlife. Although anti-hunters may think that it is preferable to influence the public with emotionally-based campaigns, what they achieve in the name of conservation often fails to be in the best interest of wildlife.

Safari Club International

SCI, a nonprofit IRC § 501(c)(4) corporation, has approximately 50,000 members and 190 chapters worldwide, including membership and a strong chapter network in Connecticut. SCI's missions include the conservation of wildlife, protection of the hunter, and education of the public concerning hunting and its use as a conservation tool. SCI has long been an active supporter of using sound-scientific principles in managing wildlife populations.

Senate Bill 227, Cecil's Law

If enacted, S. 227 will prohibit the possession, transport, and importation of any part of a number of animal species. Neither the bills nor their supporters can explain exactly how such prohibitions will positively impact these species.

The prohibitions are not necessary because other treaties and laws already provide greater and more appropriate protections to conserve the species singled out by the bills. For example, elephant, black and white rhinoceros, lion, and leopard – all species covered by S. 227 – are already listed on Appendix I or II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). As a result, the trade of these species is already regulated by CITES.

The Endangered Species Act, the Lacey Act, and the African Elephant Conservation Act are federal laws that already extensively restrict the importation, possession and trade of endangered and threatened species. In addition, Connecticut state laws already protect local wildlife and prohibit the possession of any animal product from another country where the wildlife is known to have been killed illegally. Even though advocates for S. 227 claim this legislation is needed to protect African species, the bills' prohibitions will not protect wildlife. Since the 1990s the African elephant population has grown and

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stabilized at approximately 420,000 - 650,000 throughout Africa. Similarly, the southern white rhino population is growing in South Africa.

In fact, sustainable use hunting is the primary reason why the southern white rhino has recovered. At the turn of the century, only around 50-100 white rhino remained in South Africa and urgent conservation action, including the involvement of private landowners, was taken to save the species from extinction. Since 1968, South Africa has permitted hunting of southern white rhino and data from the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group shows that since hunting began, the numbers of southern white rhino have increased from 1,800 to over 20,000.

By allowing private landowners to conduct rhino hunts, the rhinos are economically valuable and private landowners and communities benefit from having rhinos on their land. Income from photo-tourism does not provide enough money to protect and grow rhino populations. Trophy hunting provides an important source of conservation. The funds provided by hunters provide a real difference for the protection and sustainability of rhino populations. By allowing private landowners to conduct limited trophy hunting of rhinos, giving white rhinos an economic value and allowed private landowners and communities to benefit from having rhinos on their land. It became an incentive to own rhinos and currently almost 25% of Africa's rhinos are privately owned.

While there is a legitimate concern regarding ivory trafficking throughout the world, CITES has not identified any significant flow of illegal ivory into or through the United States. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has also reported that there is no significant trade of illegal ivory into this country and the continued sale of lawfully owned ivory in the United States will not increase poaching. This piece of legislation will do nothing to prevent poaching.

With respect to all legally hunted species, S. 227 represents a solution in search of a problem. Collectively, USFWS Enforcement Officers at the closest designated reentry ports, New York and Boston, inspected 7,706 legally hunted sport trophies in 2014. Of this number, USFWS seized four improperly imported, sport-hunted trophies.

SCI and every legitimate hunter abhor the act of poaching. Unfortunately, S. 227 will do nothing to stop poaching in Africa or elsewhere. It will only penalize law-abiding citizens of Connecticut.

For the aforementioned, we respectfully urge the Committee to oppose S. 227. If you have any questions or need anything further, please contact Jeff Patchen, Manager of Government Relations, State Affairs at jpatchen@safariclub.org.

Sincerely,



Larry Higgins
President, Safari Club International