



Public Hearing—March 4, 2016

Environment Committee

Testimony submitted by Friends of Animals

Presented by Nicole Rivard

Senate Bill No. 227—AN ACT CONCERNING CECIL'S LAW.

To prohibit the import, sale and trade of big-game hunting trophies from overseas.

My name is Nicole Rivard and I am a correspondent for Friends of Animals, an international animal rights organization founded in 1957 and headquartered in Darien, Conn. I'm honored to be here on behalf of our 6,000 Connecticut members to champion the historic Cecil's Law, a bill that was drafted by Michael Harris, director of our Wildlife Law Program, that would ban the importation, possession, sale or transportation in Connecticut of the African elephant, lion, leopard, and black and white rhinos—all threatened and endangered species.

FoA's Wildlife Law Program intends to end the importation into the U.S. of trophy hunted animals by 2020. The passing of Sen. Bill 227 would bring us closer to that goal—and Connecticut would not only shut down Bradley International Airport and Tweed New Haven Airport to a practice that has no place in civilized society...but it will be on the right side of history.

Cecil's Law, named after the well-known lion in Zimbabwe who was slaughtered by an American trophy hunter last July, is currently moving through the New York state legislature.

- You might hear testimony that without sport hunting, African governments would not have money for conservation. FoA was one of the first international organizations to challenge that regulated hunting can be a conservation tool. Just last year, in an NBC investigation, former top U.S. officials questioned America's ability to vet trophy hunting abroad—admitting monitoring conservation programs in foreign countries is challenging for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The agency even suspended the import of elephant trophies from Zimbabwe and Tanzania, citing lack of information to prove that the sport-hunting programs enhance the survival of the species.
- The truth is there is growing scientific evidence that the legal trade of trophy hunted species enables illegal poaching by providing poachers a legal market to launder their contraband. One example is South Africa—the country has seen a marked rise in illegal rhino poaching since it began selling permits for trophy hunted rhinos in 2004. Illegal trophy hunting has increased 5,000 percent since 2007.

- According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1.2 million animals were legally killed by American hunters and sent to the U.S. as trophies over the last 15 years. During the month of July, when Cecil was killed, U.S. hunters legally killed 69 other lions in Africa for fun who they could mount as trophies back home. In 2015 alone, 405 lion trophies, 67 elephant trophies, and 217 leopard trophies were imported into the U.S. from Africa.

While those 404 other lions died for the “fun” of it, without any acknowledgement, the Killing of Cecil the Lion gained national attention. This is Connecticut’s chance to make something good come out of that tragedy—and to create a deterrent to remaining Americans who romanticize and still find pleasure in the atrocious act of trophy hunting. Please vote yes to Cecil’s Law.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Bill No. 227. If you should require any additional information, please contact Michael Harris, director of FoA’s Wildlife Law Program, at 720.949.7791 or michaelharris@friendsofanimals.org.