



## Elephant Protection Association

PO Box 1043  
Doylestown, PA 18901

March 3, 2016

Connecticut Environment Committee  
Hearing Scheduled for March 4, 2016

### **Opposition to SB 227**

Dear Committee Members,

The Elephant Protection Association opposes SB 227. This one-size-fits-all prohibition on the trade of elephant ivory and other wildlife species will do much more harm than good for the prospects of these species' survival. This policy ultimately would strip African countries and local communities that host these species of tools and incentives to balance wildlife needs with the costs of maintaining them, ultimately reducing these species to nuisances. As an example, if this kind of law had been in place for the past forty years, the White Rhino would already be extinct.

The IUCN Redlist description of the White Rhino (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/4185/0>) explains how well regulated sustainable use policies saved the White Rhino from extinction, and it foreshadows how progress with this species is being reversed by commercially prohibitionist policies like HB 542.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) ranks the White Rhinoceros as "Near Threatened", below the more serious statuses of "Endangered" or "Vulnerable" and just above "Least Concern."

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Southern White Rhino had been reduced to one small population of approximately 20-50 animals. South Africa took the lead in saving this species by partnering with private land owners. As a result of encouraging the *regulated* consumptive use (hunting and harvesting for horn) of these animals, South Africa dramatically increased the range for this species on private lands. By 2010 there were over 20,000 Southern White Rhinos in the wild.

The recent trend in banning hunting or the legal trade of rhino horn as a response to poaching is reversing this trend. Because there are substantial costs to private land owners of hosting rhinos, private land owners have begun surrendering them back to the state. Unable to offset the costs of security, insurance and habitat maintenance with sustainable use of the species, private land owners can't afford to keep rhinos on their property. This is shrinking the range for rhinos and increasing concentration on public lands that are far more vulnerable to poachers.

You should also consider the plight of Northern White Rhinos. This practically identical species is extinct in the wild. Only 3 remain in captivity, and cross-breeding them with Southern White Rhinos is likely the only chance for this species' survival. The only difference between the Northern and Southern White Rhinos is the countries they called home. Countries like Kenya that have banned consumptive use of

these and other species have seen rhino and other populations of wildlife, like elephants, plummet, while southern African nations that partnered with the private sector had populations flourish.

SB 227 endorses a failed prohibitionist strategy toward wildlife management. It punishes people who own objects that were legally acquired and pose no threat to living populations of animals, while it strips wildlife of future value to local communities and the countries that host them. This bill effectively denies conservation tools that could act as “carrots” – positive incentives to grow wildlife populations – and leaves African nations only with punitive sticks that, when used exclusively, have already proven ineffective at stopping poachers.

As bad as SB 227 is for wildlife, it sets up Connecticut for years of litigation and liability over unconstitutional takings of private property without just compensation. The absurd “registration” scheme is a feeble attempt to paper over the abusive taking this law requires. Billions of dollars’ worth of ivory flowed through and can still be found in Connecticut. There is no realistic way people who own that property can or will comply with the registration scheme in this law, and it would be enormously expensive for Connecticut to impose it. In the end, all of these state resources would be wasted because this bill serves no conservation purpose.

A final reason for rejecting SB 227 lies in the extent to which proponents exaggerate and misrepresent facts about wildlife in Africa. Poaching must be and has been fought, and it has been on the decline since 2011. Nowhere near “96 elephants a day” are being killed by poachers, and elephant populations thrive in southern Africa. Criminals have taken over poaching (a truism) especially in Central and Eastern Africa, but the relationship with international terrorism is grossly exaggerated. I am attaching a separate, fully sourced letter that rebuts the false claims proponents make to push through a bill that has little to do with conservation and science, and is completely based on a fatally flawed Animal Rights agenda and an anti-hunting bias.

Please vote “No” on SB 227.

Very Respectfully Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert A. Mitchell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert A. Mitchell  
Founding Member