

To whom it may concern:

It is a mystery how a bill like this could make it to the floor, after so much discussion in the past.

By profession and trade, I am a Connecticut tradesman and taxpayer, operating an historic pipe organ restoration shop in Stonington, Connecticut. I have been plying my trade in this town since 1982, and have restored a significant number of historic pipe organs in the state of Connecticut, including the second oldest America-built pipe organ in New England (1823), located in Trinity Episcopal Church, Milton, Connecticut.

The typical keyboard covering for pipe organs the world over, for the past 4 centuries, has been ivory. The engraved stopknob faces for all American-built pipe organs since 1810 have been small ivory disks. In my work I have never purchased new ivory for restoration purposes, but instead recycle old material that can range from a decade to 160 years old.

The historical value of any antique artifact, including musical instruments, is based on its originality and historical purity. It would be nothing short of vandalism to remove century's old ivory from an historic organ's keyboard only to replace it with ugly, non-original plastic and then to destroy the original material from an animal dead 150 years.

This bill would make me a criminal for earning my living in the state of Connecticut, having an historic ivory keyboard in my shop for repair. It would make the church in Stonington where I worship, also liable for criminal prosecution for having two ivory keyboards on its historic 1870 pipe organ.

Studies have proven that no contraband ivory has been used in U.S. musical instruments since the first ivory ban in the 1980s. Recent studies have also proven that the market in contraband ivory has increased, not decreased, since the Federal ban was instituted last year because ISIS is now financing its operation by peddling contraband ivory to China.

Vandalizing historic Art and criminalizing its owners isn't going to save one single elephant now or 100 years from now. This is clearly an instance of lawmakers pandering to a special interest group by throwing common sense and logic out the window. No instrument maker is scavenging ivory off the historic keyboard of a priceless and irreplaceable antique musical instrument and grinding it into a powder to sell to a druggist in China. Neither is any 80-year old grandmother or 8-year old child who is playing an ivory keyboard on the piano in their front parlor.

If I took a razor blade and scraped a layer of paint off the canvas of a Rembrandt painting hanging in the Wadsworth Athenaeum, I'd be arrested and thrown in jail for vandalism, and excoriated around the world as a criminal. Yet this is exactly what this ill-considered bill would expect me to do in my professional capacity, and would make me a criminal if I refused to obey.

It is time for the people I elected to office to protect me, my livelihood, and freedoms as a citizen of the great state of Connecticut, to rise above the special interest groups and reject this draconian piece of remarkably ill-considered legislation.

We do need proper legislation to prohibit the sale of poached and illegal ivory, and to ban its sale for any purpose. This is not that legislation. It won't save one single elephant, ever, but will vandalize irreplaceable Art and make criminals out of innocent and law-abiding citizens.

Sincerely,  
Scot Huntington, Master Pipe Organ Builder  
S.L. Huntington & Co.  
Stonington, Ct