

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-925

AN ACT PROHIBITING THE IMPORT, SALE AND POSSESSION OF AFRICAN ELEPHANTS, LIONS, LEOPARDS, BLACK RHINOCEROS, WHITE

Title: RHINOCEROS AND GIRAFFES.

Vote Date: 3/12/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/3/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Bobby G. Gibson, 15th Dist.
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Rep. Anne M. Hughes, 135th Dist.
Rep. Mitch Bolinsky, 106th Dist.
Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria, 105th Dist.
Rep. David K. Labriola, 131st Dist.
Rep. Lucy Dathan, 142nd Dist.

Sen. Derek Slap, 5th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

In 2015 Walter Palmer, an American dentist, traveled to Africa and was reported to have lured Cecil, a protected African lion living in a wildlife refuge and tagged as part of a scientific study, out of Hwange National Park in Matabeleland North, Zimbabwe to hunt the lion. The killing of Cecil for sport, along with the trophy hunting of twenty-three other protected lions that were part of the study, lead to wide-spread international outcry against the hunting tourism industry's involvement with the hunting of protected and endangered species. The bill seeks to help protect certain endangered species by banning the importation, transportation and possession of African elephants, lions, leopards, black rhinoceros', white rhinoceros' and giraffes, including products made in-whole or in-part from such species.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Opposes SB925. Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) recognizes the importance of protecting and advancing conservation of imperiled wildlife. DEEP states that the United States is already party to the Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Proposed legislation could have "unintended consequences" of harming established conservation efforts in African countries where hunting supports such efforts. DEEP emphasizes local resources for big game, international agreements and federal law are best equipped to deal with these issues.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Bob Duff, Senate Majority Leader

The shooting of Cecil the lion a few years ago put the spotlight on trophy hunting of endangered species. This bill seeks to help stop the illegal hunting of endangered species by prohibiting the import of such trophy animals into Connecticut. Furthermore, the bill is prospective by allowing individuals who currently possess such products to keep them with a certification from the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and exempts museums from the bill.

Lucy Dathan, Representative

Thirty-nine lions and one giraffe were killed and imported to Connecticut between 2005 and 2016. Ending the continuing endangerment of these animals, Connecticut can support the continued existence of these species.

Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director, CT Votes for Animals

Trophy hunting is the killing of wild animals for body parts, but not primarily for food or sustenance. Between 2004 and 2014, US based hunters imported more than 1.26 million wildlife trophies. African elephants, lions, leopards, black Rhinoceros', white rhinoceros' and giraffes are either endangered or bordering on extinction.

Megan Macomber, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters

Illegal poaching has decimated populations of African elephants, lions, leopards, black rhinoceros', white rhinoceros', and giraffes and is a major source of funding for criminal organizations and terrorist groups. CLCV provides examples from Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army. Although many trophy hunters claim that money spent on hunting is used towards local conservation efforts, only 3% of trophy hunting revenue is used for such efforts and related activities. CLCV gave example that from 2005 through 2015, Connecticut residents killed and imported thirty-nine lions and one giraffe.

Mystic Aquarium et al

Requests the addition of "zoological institution" before "museum" on line 25 of SB925. The legislation would assure high standards of animal care by allowing only qualified entities to work with the animals identified in the bill. Entities accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), and the Zoological Association of America are publicly recognized as having excellence and commitment to veterinary care, ethics, physical facilities, staffing, conservation, education, safety and security, and animal management and welfare. Fewer than ten percent of the 2,800 wildlife exhibitors licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Animal Welfare Act possess the AZA accreditation.

In excess of 45 additional testimonies in support of SB925.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Kelly McConney Moore, Interim Senior Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberty Union CT

ACLU-CT recognizes the concerns raised by SB925. ACLU-CT has identified issues with the creation of excessive criminal liability section 1(f) of SB925. Section 1(f) of SB925 creates a criminal liability at a felony level with up to two years' incarceration. ACLU-CT's view is this penalty is excessive and unwarranted for this crime and requests review by the Judicial Committee.

Cyrus Hunter Baird, Manager of Government Relations, Safari Club International

The bill will have detrimental effects on wildlife conservation, will hinder anti-poaching efforts, and deprive rural communities of hunting-related tourism dollars. Unlike many funding sources in the United States, countries like Africa rely on regulated trophy hunting for conservation funding, wildlife management, and anti-poaching efforts. Additionally, SCI provided example of a 2016 legal challenge the state of New Jersey faced with similar legislation. Opponents of the New Jersey legislation argued that the state law is preempted by Section 6(f) of the Endangered Species Act. On August 2016, Federal Court entered a judgement against the state. Finally, SCI argues this bill provides a simple approach to a complicated issue due to the challenges associated with developing policies that regulate the trade of wildlife across multiple administrative and regulatory jurisdictions in the context of international trade and commerce.

Camp Fire Club of America et al

Camp Fire Club of America et al reiterates the Safari Club International testimonial.

Gary M. Sylvestre

Opposes SB927.

Reported by: Steve Smith

Date: 3/15/2021