

April 7, 2015

Vermont House of Representatives
Committee on Fish, Wildlife & Water Resources

Re: Support for H.297



Dear Chair Deen, Vice Chair McCullough, and Honorable Committee Members:

The Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) is a national non-profit organization of attorneys working to protect the lives and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. On behalf of ALDF's more than 200,000 members and supporters, I am writing in support of H.297, which would ban the sale and trade of ivory and rhinoceros horns.

Illegal poaching is estimated to account for sixty-five percent of the deaths of African elephants, a critically threatened species whose population has been decimated by over seventy-five percent in the past few decades due to wildlife trafficking and a growing demand for ivory. It is estimated that an average of ninety-six elephants are killed every day for ivory and that African elephants could become extinct in the next ten years. The U.S. is second only to China in the sale of ivory products. In recognition of the fact that domestic trade in ivory serves as a loophole for the illegal trade, the Obama administration issued an executive order in July 2013, declaring wildlife trafficking to be an "international crisis" and directing federal agencies to undertake rulemaking to eliminate import and export of ivory for commercial purposes.

Last October, more than 130 cities worldwide participated in the *Global March for Elephants and Rhinos*. Also last year, New York State and New Jersey banned the sale of ivory. This year, bans on ivory and rhino horn have been introduced in several states in addition to Vermont, including Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Washington.

We commend Representatives Wright and Lenes for their leadership on this important issue. ALDF urges the Committee to support H.297 to help ensure that Vermont joins the states that are taking proactive measures to help halt the rapid decline of elephant and rhinoceros populations. Please don't hesitate to let us know if ALDF may help in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carney".

Carney Anne Nasser, Esq.
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