



April 7, 2015

Vermont State Legislature
House Committee on Fish, Wildlife, & Water Resources
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Representative Deen,

On behalf of Born Free USA, a national nonprofit animal protection and wildlife conservation organization based in Washington, DC, I would like to express my firm support of H. 297 to ban the sale of ivory and rhinoceros horn in Vermont.

This bill is a crucial step toward managing the growing trade in illegally trafficked wildlife products in the United States. H. 297 would ban the sale, purchase, or trade of ivory and rhino horn in the state. The bill's definition of ivory includes the tooth or tusk of a range of species to ensure that illegal ivory cannot be passed off as legal ivory.

As you are aware, the elephant poaching crisis has become increasingly severe over the past several years. Approximately 96 elephants are slaughtered daily by poachers, and over 100,000 were killed between 2010-2012. Unfortunately, the U.S. is the second largest ivory market in the world, so there is a desperate and urgent need for legislative measures such as this one.

Additionally, all five rhino species are in serious danger due to poaching. Africa's rhinos are critically endangered, with a population of fewer than 5,000. There are only 3,000 one-horned rhinos remaining in India and Nepal, and Southeast Asia's Sumatran and Javan rhinos number only in the hundreds and tens, respectively. The horns, made of a substance akin to fingernails, are used in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Despite conclusive evidence that they have no curative properties, over a thousand rhinos are killed for their horns every year.

Ending the illegal trade in wildlife parts is a core mission of Born Free USA, and I applaud the compassionate measures you have proposed in H. 297. I am hopeful that this legislation will receive overwhelming support because time is running out to save these majestic animals.

Sincerely,

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