

H.297 Senate Introduction

I am Rep. Jim McCullough of Williston.

Mr. Chair and Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.297; “An act relating to the sale of ivory and rhinoceros horn”. I would add, and know you all understand and agree, could also be entitled,” An act relating to threatened and endangered species.”

I know in your hearts you all deeply grieve the elephants and rhinoceros impending extinction should the trends continue.

I totally understand your charge is to protect Vermonters legal commerce while being responsive to the need for balancing protection of these magnificent keystone T&E species.

Please understand, the House Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources committee also accepted the balancing challenge of T&E/economic impact. Last year we heard at least 13 hours of testimony from all interested parties expressing an interest to testify. This January we decided, as all committees must, to switch from testimony to writing policy.

It is important to note... much of the economic angst and projected economic hardships directed at H.297 are current Federal law governing import, export, and interstate transport. H.297 must rely on this threshold as we develop our intra-state legislation.

H.297 as introduced largely replicated the very successful NJ law containing no exemptions. This is clearly the best approach for curbing illicit ivory trade in the US. Hours of testimony and copious emails confirmed this. After hours of testimony and after copious emails it, alternately, became obvious to our committee certain Vermonters desired economic relief.

H.297, Sec. 1 (e) Exceptions provided that relief, as did an extended “sell off” date; Sec. 3 Effective Date with the act becoming effective 1/1/2018. These exceptions were met with horror by the T&E/ivory advocates and, as you can stipulate, were dismissed as completely inadequate by the economic interests advocates. By some metrics, “If nobody likes it, we probably did a good as possible job.”

Allow me to add, the ascertains made in this room that H.297 violates due process, also the suggestion that ivory police will be smashing grandmothers teapot are without merit and “out of bounds”.