

H.99 Talking Points

H.99 will stop the intrastate trade of imperiled wildlife parts (14 of the world's most vulnerable species) which, today, is legal in the state of Vermont and is a trade that is decimating this planet's last and most critically important keystone and other species, bringing many to the brink of extinction. As long as this trade is still legal here, Vermont is complicit in the extinction of these species. 11 other states plus DC, realizing this, have already taken swift action. State bans are critical to ending demand in the USA, one of the largest importers of imperiled wildlife parts in the world. Our action will also accelerate global awareness about the problem. The stakes now could not be higher for Vermont. It has been proven time and again that when one jurisdiction closes its markets, as is happening all around us, trade may flourish in places where it is still open. Also, the greater wildlife trade is problematic because it exacerbates an exploitative mentality towards wildlife and, as we are witnessing now with Covid-19 and other zoonotic diseases of the past, the more human activity and wildlife trafficking interface with wildlife, the more at risk we all are.

- H.99 is about **stopping illegal wildlife trafficking** (a \$20 billion/year crisis— the 4th largest illegal trade in the world after drugs, humans, and arms/counterfeiting). Science has proven that the legal market serves as cover for the illegal one.
- Experts around the world including Pat Bosco, a Special Agent with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for over 27 years, with his last 12 based in Vermont, stated the following in testimony in favor of a complete ivory ban that he delivered to Vermont: **"By closing legal loopholes, you also create awareness and help reduce demand. The more ivory items circulate, the more interest it generates."**
- After lengthy testimony from both sides and wishing to find **reasonable compromises to appease the opposition**, the House Committee is presenting a bill with reasonable exemptions for antiques, knives and guns, and for all musical instruments. It also created an 18 month delayed enactment period, one of the longest in the country, to allow anyone who wishes to sell their imperiled wildlife product to do so within a very generous window of time. Anyone else may simply keep their products, pass them on to the next generation, or give them away. **This bill is simply stopping the buying and selling, the very trade that is perpetuating the killing.** As presented today, H.99 strikes the right balance and should be passed without further modification.
- While parts of the Endangered Species Act are being threatened on the federal level, we here on the state level have an obligation to act. Federal laws restrict import, export, and interstate trade, but not trade that happens within a state. **That is why states need to act— to restrict intrastate trade.** Interpol estimates that only 10% of illegal products are caught at the national border, meaning 90% seep into the country and wind up free and clear on the state level. Once on a state level, if a state doesn't have a law against it, the trade is by default legal,

perpetuating demand and killing. In addition, Federal laws have broad exemptions and loopholes and some don't even cover many highly endangered species.

- 11 states (plus DC) have already taken action, including our neighbors New York and New Hampshire. States include New Jersey (Republican Gov. Chris Christie was the first governor to sign this into law- and his is the strongest with zero exemptions), New York, California, Washington, Hawaii, Oregon, Nevada, New Hampshire, Illinois, Minnesota, and New Mexico. **Vermonters had wanted to be third and we came close with H.297 which in 2016 passed the House an overwhelming 135-4.** Since that time, many more species have been lost forever including in 2018 when the world lost its last male Northern White Rhino.
- The human toll is astounding. **1,000 rangers have been killed trying to stop this trade in the last 10 years.**
- The final results from Paul Allen's Great Elephant Census **showed a decline of 30% of savanna elephant populations between 2007 and 2014.** This translates to a current rate of decline of 8% per year, primarily due to poaching, to feed very much alive ivory markets (<http://www.greatelephantcensus.com>). **Experts predict at the current rate of poaching, elephants could be gone from the wild in the next 5-10 years.** In a three year period between 2010 and 2012, 100,000 elephants were slaughtered for their tusks. We kill 100 million sharks a year. Over 60% of all shark species are being decimated. Tigers are being slaughtered for traditional "medicine" without any scientific evidence that it works. There are 3,200 left in the wild when just a century ago there were more than 100,000. **The giraffe population has plummeted 80% since 2005** (and a study in 2018 found giraffe parts for sale in 52 US locations). The giraffe decimation is being called "the silent extinction" (which is why NY just passed legislation banning the trade in giraffe parts having already banned the sale of ivory and rhino horn in 2014). All five rhino species are threatened with extinction. Pangolins are the most highly trafficked mammals in the world— all 8 species are threatened with extinction.
- The ivory trade of today feeds crime syndicates and armed militias such as **al-Shabaab, Janjaweed, Boko Haram, the Mai Mai Raia Mutomboki, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and others.** Unlike the ivory trade of the past, the worldwide \$1.4 billion ivory trade of today feeds crime syndicates and armed militias in their terrorism and illicit activities around the world.
- **Shutting down legal trade works.** History has proven so. In 1989, the global ban on ivory trade led to a diminished carving industry in China and a decrease in demand for tusks. Another example, China, the largest market for ivory, banned ivory sales beginning in December 31, 2017. Since then? A new report has unveiled that the price of raw ivory is

plummeting there. **Researchers found that the wholesale price in early 2014 was \$2,100 per kilogram where as now that same kilo has dropped to \$730.**

- Reports from states that have taken action and first hand testimony from Sen. Lesniak (NJ) **show no increase in black market; just an end to trade.** The take home message continues to be that sales of otherwise legal wildlife products stimulate demand for illegal products.
- In closing, Sen. Raymond Lesniak, the NJ State Senator champion of their complete ban, testified before the Vermont Senate Committee four years ago. He has said, “New Jersey’s comprehensive ban on ivory and rhino horns, which only allows currently owned ivory and rhino horns to be transferred through estates or to museums, **has been in effect for nearly a year without a hitch and has given a huge boost to the worldwide effort to save elephants and rhinos from extinction.**”
- The precise amount of imperiled wildlife products as a percentage of Vermont businesses is unknown. However, **exhaustive research by members of VermontForWildlife has shown no ivory at dozens of antique stores contacted.** It is truly a miniscule portion of any Vermont antique dealer’s business and some stores contacted already expressed moral opposition to ever selling imperiled wildlife products and have voluntarily chosen not to do so. Regarding a close look into the largest dealer of antiques in the state (and therefore the most likely to see wildlife products), our team found **3 items out of 815 to contain wildlife parts that would have be affected by this bill.** In terms of value, these three items **represented 0.4 percent – less than half of one percent – of the total value for that particular auction.** A similar analysis was done across 5 of that company’s auctions four years ago with similar findings. **The overwhelming fact is that this bill will not have any sort of significant impact on Vermont businesses but it will have a profound impact on the statement Vermont is making to other states and to the world on where we stand on the crisis.**

Additional resources:

www.vermontforwildlife.org — ALL-volunteer group of citizen activists around the State

Vermont kids demand action:

<https://youtu.be/owySfvSbVXo>

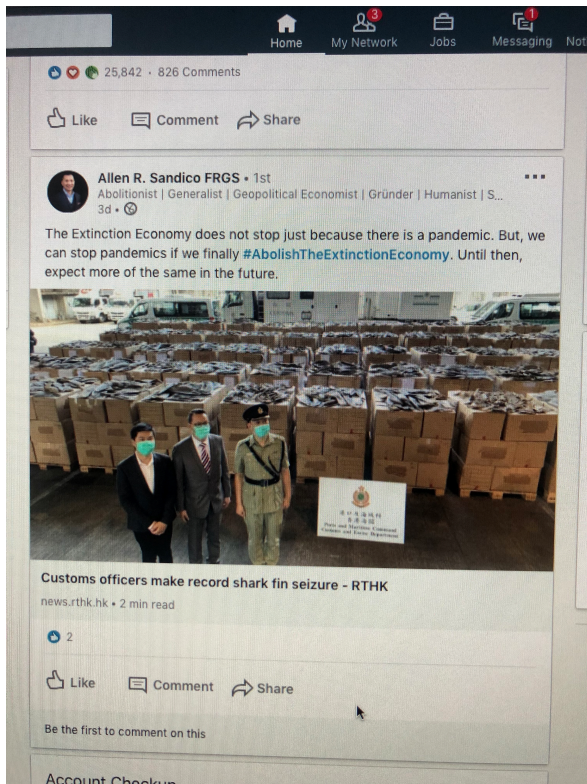
Heart of a Ranger:

<https://youtu.be/Z5eN3S6Mic0>

My article on medium.com which was retweeted by world-renowned National Geographic investigative journalist Bryan Christy:<https://medium.com/@tusktaskforce/seven-down-forty-three-to-go-975e8cc0dabe>

Current situation, recent news:

However, criminal poaching gangs are targeting and attempting to recruit vulnerable people in Kenya who were left unemployed by the collapse of the country's tourism industry due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Kenya's tourism industry generates at least \$1.6 billion in annual revenues with safaris a cornerstone. The tourism sector has literally dried up with no international arrivals, and little domestic tourism. -Peter Hetz



Customs officers make record shark fin seizure:
<https://www.businessinsider.com/hong-kong-seized-28-tons-shark-fin-largest-capture-ever-2020-5>

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These rhino pictures came to my inbox on 3/28/20 from friends on the ground in Africa. The subject was **“Increase in rhino poaching”** The mother was just killed for horn that can today be legally traded in the state of Vermont. My friends were able to rescue the highly traumatized calf in an *attempt* to save it and it is seen here on the plane. The needless slaughter must end.

