



Legislation Text

File #: 14-0392, **Version:** 1

WHEREAS, Increasing demand for ivory is fueling the brutal slaughter of African elephants; and

WHEREAS, Illegal trade in elephant ivory is the most significant threat to Africa's elephant populations and is driving the mass slaughter of elephants, especially across Central and Eastern Africa; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 35,000 wild African elephants were poached in 2012 because of the demand for their tusks, which contain ivory; and

WHEREAS, The wild African elephant population has declined from 1.2 million in 1980 to just 420,000 in 2012, and Central Africa's forest elephant populations have declined by 75% in the last decade due to illegal poaching for ivory; and

WHEREAS, Elephant ivory currently sells for about \$3,000 per kilogram, representing a value of \$20,000 per elephant; and

WHEREAS, With an estimated value between \$10 billion and \$20 billion per year, the illegal wildlife trade is a major trans-national crime run by professional criminal networks and is strongly linked to other trans-national organized criminal activities such as narcotics, weapons, and human-trafficking; and

WHEREAS, There is significant evidence that illegal trade in high-value wildlife parts, including elephant ivory, is being used as a source for financing criminal organizations and armed groups that pose a threat to U.S. economic and security interests in Africa and elsewhere, including the Lord's Resistance Army, al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda, Sudanese militias, and other groups with potential terrorist ties; and

WHEREAS, The State Department of the United States has provided that criminal organizations' involvement in wildlife trafficking "perpetuates corruption, threatens the rule of law and border security in fragile regions, and destabilizes communities that depend on wildlife for biodiversity and eco-tourism"; and

WHEREAS, In 1989, the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) banned the international commercial trade in ivory; and

WHEREAS, In the United States, the import, export, interstate trade, and commercial sale of ivory removed from the wild after the CITES ban (and in some cases even earlier) is illegal, with a few exceptions; and

WHEREAS, In many cases, documented ivory predating the 1989 ban (called "pre-convention" ivory) can be traded. However, laws vary by state and by species; and

WHEREAS, A major challenge to effective enforcement is that parallel legal ivory markets serve as a cover for illegal ivory from recently killed elephants as it is extremely difficult to distinguish between legal ivory, including antiques and illegal ivory, once it is within our borders, therefore parallel legal ivory markets are contributing to the elephant poaching across Africa; and

WHEREAS, With limited enforcement, minimum penalties in addition to elaborate forgery schemes, traffickers are able to get illegal ivory into the U.S. market; and

WHEREAS, As long as demand for ivory remains high and enforcement effort is low, the legal trade will continue to

serve as a front and criminal syndicates will continue to drive elephant poaching across Africa, which will lead to the extinction of wild elephants in Africa; and

WHEREAS, The United States is the world's second largest importer and market after China for ivory sales, and because current laws allow for the legal trade in certain ivory products, and include broad loopholes and exemptions, there is significant illegal trade in ivory in the United States; and

WHEREAS, As the United States reaches out to China, the world's largest ivory consumer nation, and other countries to crack down on the illegal ivory trade it is important for the United States and for the State of Illinois to stop the trade within our own borders and lead by example; and

WHEREAS, States have an opportunity to lead the way during this critical time for Africa's elephants by establishing moratoria on the sale of all elephant ivory and ivory products; and

WHEREAS, States can eliminate the significant enforcement challenge posed by the legal ivory trade, raise consumer awareness, reduce poaching pressures on elephants, and set a critical example for other state and federal lawmakers as well as other countries; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Zoological Society, which manages the Brookfield Zoo, the Lincoln Park Zoo and Shedd Aquarium are three Illinois-based organizations accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums that operate significant wildlife conservation programs locally and around the world; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Zoological Society, Lincoln Park Zoo, and Shedd Aquarium are partnering with the Wildlife Conservation Society, an international conservation organization that has launched "96 Elephants" a campaign named for the number of elephants killed each day in 2012 by poachers to raise awareness about the alarming rate at which wild African elephants are being poached because of the demand for ivory; to generate action in support of elephants and raise consumer awareness; and to encourage state and federal lawmakers to eliminate the significant enforcement challenge posed by the legal ivory trade;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That, I, Toni Preckwinkle, along with the members of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board of Commissioners and on behalf of all citizens of Cook County, recognize the Chicago Zoological Society, Lincoln Park Zoo, and Shedd Aquarium for their efforts to raise awareness of the plight of African elephants including a need for a statewide moratoria on all ivory sales; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this resolution be tendered to Dr. Stuart Strahl, President and CEO of the Chicago Zoological Society and Director of the Brookfield Zoo; to Dr. Kevin Bell, President and CEO of Lincoln Park Zoo; and to Ted A. Beattie, President and CEO of Shedd Aquarium in recognition of their support of a U.S. moratorium on illegal ivory, bolstering protection of African elephants, and educating the public about the link between ivory consumption and the elephant poaching crisis.