

From: A Gathering of Spirits Gallery

To: House Committee on Judiciary

From: Steve Stegall, District 9

DA 5/16/15

RE: Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 913

Chair Baker, Members of the Committee, for the record my name is Steve Stegall I live in Mt. Hood, Parkdale, Oregon.

I have been an artist and sculptor of fossil Woolly Mammoth ivory, Mastodon and Fossil Walrus ivory for over 40 years.

I appreciate that you have recently taken Mastodon and Walrus ivories off of this bill. However, the bill is so unclear that it in no way stops illegal and illicit trade, but it seriously hurts innocent, small time artisans, fossil collectors, rock hounds, and business owners.

As I have stated I have worked with the fossil ivories for over 40 years, and for the presenter of the bill to state that Mastodon is not used and can easily be identified is in my opinion incorrect. The angles of the Schraeger lines among extinct Proboscideans are similar, whereas they are distinctly different from extant species. --This means THEY ARE DIFFERENT FROM ELEPHANT TUSKS (an extant species) BUT SIMILAR TO EACH OTHER . There are both mammoth and mastodon tusks found in Alaska and the Yukon, you cannot, without special equipment, tell the difference between the two materials, I know because I work with it almost every day.

I feel someone needs to stand up and educate the committee that to ban this material would affect hundreds if not thousands of artists and suppliers, especially in the Northwest USA-- Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

I myself would be very much affected, as I have invested a great deal of money and time to secure my later years as an artist and also to be able to sell un-worked fossil ivory to the other artists. It has been a part of my income for over 20 years, selling it legally to artists all over the US.

The fact that one of the oldest American art forms (scrimshaw) would be come illegal, would be a very sad thing.

The effect this bill would have on the native culture in Alaska could also be devastating. They are legally allowed to collect mammoth ivory from their tribal land and sell it as one of the few means of making a living. Also gold miners of Alaska and the Yukon are allowed to sell any fossil ivory they find. To stop the marketing of that resource would only cause hardship.

I have a lot of doubts as to the accuracy of some of the statements made by people in support of this bill, and would like the committee to really try to educate themselves and vote this bill down. More research should be done before an emotionally driven law that does not protect the victims, but persecutes the innocent is put into effect.

I watched the video of the last meeting and I think there were some important points brought up that were really not answered in a way to help understand how this bill would actually help stop the poaching in Africa. It does nothing to help the elephants, it only hurts North American small time people and businesses trying to make a living. It puts law-abiding citizens on the wrong side of the law and increases the burden of an already over-burdened police force.

Why should legislators make a crime out of using fossil material that has been a part of Native and contemporary art forms illegal when there is no real correlation between mammoth ivory demand and elephant ivory demand? This is an emotional issue that should be addressed logically, and effectively without harming innocent, tax-paying, Oregonians. I am sending a couple photos of the work I do and to show how some of the ivory could not ever be confused as elephant ivory.

Thanks for your time,
Steve Stegall