A close-up of a logo

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June 28, 2025

Dear Senator\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

Re: House Bill 994

I write to you on behalf of the *Art & Antique Dealers League of America* (AADLA) the oldest organization of its kind in the United States, Founded in 1926. Our members are esteemed members of the art and antiques community, all of whom are leading experts in their fields, some even residing in the state of Pennsylvania. There are also some dealers who occasionally exhibit in Pennsylvania, at antique shows and/or galleries; the most well known among them being the show that takes place at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

We have recently been informed, via the media, that a bill has been entered into the legislature to ban animal parts. While none of our members engage nor condone the killing of animals as a sport, several of them do indeed handle objects made from elephant tusk ivory, all of which are 100 years old, or greater. Ivory exists in all kinds of antique objects made from all over the world, and many of them are sculptures that are made from 100% ivory. While we support legislation to protect wildlife, especially those which are indigenous to America, we strongly oppose any laws which would restrict commercial trade in bonafide antiques containing elephant ivory.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) clearly permits the trade in antique ivory and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has very specific guidelines for those who wish to engage in the commercial trade in such objects. While no permit or license is issued by the Service, whomever claims the exemption from what would otherwise not be permitted, needs to provide documentation to claim this carve-out in the federal law.

The House Bill No. 994 which was recently passed by the PA House of Representatives will completely destroy the value of thousands of objects which meet the antique exemption. Collectors, antique dealers and auction houses will suffer great economic harm if this Bill is not in concert with the ESA. While the sponsors of this bill have put forth legitimate concerns on combatting the illegal wildlife trade, they have only consulted with groups who are only telling one side of this story. We believe that the stakeholders and experts in this field ought to have a say in how this law is written and/or implemented. We are willing to enlighten the lawmakers about a subject they very likely are not too familiar with. Many important antique ivory carvings can be found in many U.S. museums.

As a result, Bill No. 994 is gravely flawed. While the language includes an Exception for “activity expressly authorized by Federal Law”, the bill at the same time shreds what the federal law actually allows. That contradiction indicates that the proposed law intends to not only restrict legitimate commercial trade, but to wipe out the holdings of Pennsylvanians who have either inherited ivory items or are collectors of them. It is foolish to conclude that all of the ivory that is for sale in the state of Pennsylvania is illegal and therefore all of it must be banned. That is a conclusion that speaks of willful ignorance.

Members of the AADLA would be very interested in meeting with you, and anyone else in the legislature, in order to express the other side of this issue and to hopefully draft a law which benefits both sides rather than one which obliterates a venerable trade in works of art made from this material.

Yours truly,

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