

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2015

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Speaker of the California State Assembly
California State Capitol Building, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Speaker Atkins:

As members of Congress representing the state of California, we are writing to express our support for Assembly Bill 96, to prohibit the trade of ivory and rhinoceros horn, with exceptions. We share your concern about both the survival of elephants and rhinos, and the link between poaching and transnational organized crime, which threatens U.S. security and interests. A.B. 96 is a crucial step toward managing the growing trade in illegally trafficked wildlife products in the United States.

The devastating poaching rampage in Africa is laying waste to the iconic elephant and rhinoceros populations. The numbers become more dire with each passing day, and statistics do not convey the full horror of this ongoing slaughter. An estimated 96 elephants are killed daily by poachers, and more than 100,000 have been killed between 2010 and 2012. These gentle and intelligent animals see their families ripped apart for trinkets. Herds with generations living together for decades are quickly becoming a thing of the past.

Rhinos are facing a similar crisis. All five rhino species are in serious danger due to poaching. Africa's black rhinos are critically endangered, with a population of fewer than 5,000. More than 1,000 Southern white rhinos were killed in South Africa alone in the past year, out of only 20,000 total. There are only 3,000 one-horned rhinos remaining in India and Nepal, and Southeast Asia's Sumatran and Javan rhinos number only in the hundreds and tens, respectively. The horns are used by some traditional medical practitioners, and despite conclusive evidence that they have no curative properties, current demand levels could lead to rhinos becoming extinct in the wild in as little as 12 years.

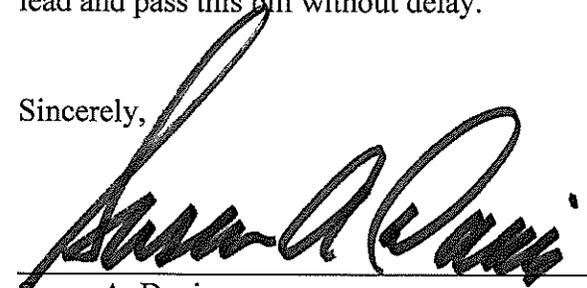
The poaching crisis is additionally problematic due to the shocking relationship between poachers and terrorists. Global criminal syndicates engineer the path from elephant slaughter in the African bush to export and shipping to marketplaces. The appalling scale of poaching we are witnessing today is intertwined with violent militias, organized crime, and government corruption in central Africa, including such high-profile terrorist groups as the Janjaweed and the Lord's Resistance Army. These groups use poaching as a substantial source of funding for their other brutal activities. The proliferation of terrorist organizations that are financed partly by wildlife trafficking, and their destabilizing effect on African governments, presents a serious threat to U.S. interests and security.

The U.S. is one of the largest ivory markets in the world, so there is an urgent need for legislative solutions such as A.B. 96. Every state, including California, bears a significant responsibility to end ivory and rhino horn consumption, and thus eliminate the U.S.'s role in escalating this crisis.

Through legislation like A.B. 96, we can shut down domestic ivory and rhino horn markets once and for all and help save these majestic species.

Thank you for introducing A.B. 96. We strongly urge the California legislature to follow your lead and pass this bill without delay.

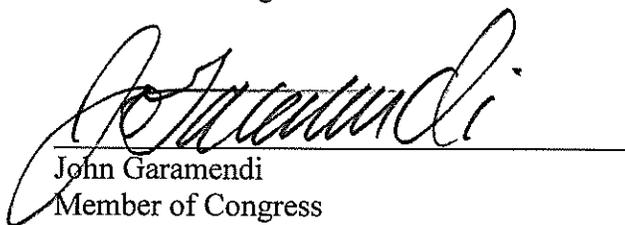
Sincerely,



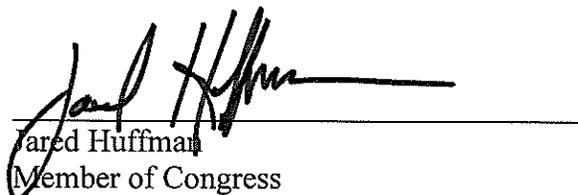
Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress



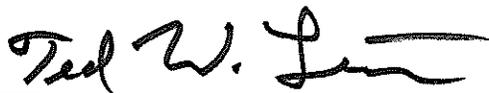
Michael Honda
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress