

Be Safe. Shoot Straight. Fight Back!



March 10th, 2020

The Honorable Henry Stern, Chair
Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee
State Capitol, Room 5046
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 1175 (Stern): Iconic African Species Protection Act

POSITION: Oppose

Dear Senator Stern,

The California Rifle and Pistol Association (CRPA), founded in 1875, is a nonprofit membership and donor supported organization with tens of thousands of members and supporters throughout California. CRPA works to defend the civil and constitutional rights of individuals to choose to responsibly own and use firearms and works to preserve the traditional role of the citizen to hunt, to conserve, and preserve California's natural resources.

CRPA is submitting this letter to voice our opposition to Senate Bill 1175 (SB 1175). This bill will make it unlawful for California's to possess animals they lawfully harvested in African nations. Hunting is a critical tool of wildlife managers to maintain wildlife populations in check with habitat, remove nonproductive individuals or those causing destruction to agriculture or livestock. These hunts are highly regulated and animals are harvested at the direction of professionals based on science. Equally important is the funding generated by hunting these species which supports local communities, conservation efforts, and the fight against poachers.

You cite the decline in numbers of the species listed under this bill. However, it should be noted that regulated hunting has never led to the unnecessary reduction or loss of a species. In fact, the loss of habitat and poaching has had the most profound impact on many threatened and endangered species. SB 1175 does nothing to provide long term habitat, solutions or funding to combat poaching in Africa. Instead, SB 1175 penalizes law abiding California conservationist hunters for mere possession of wildlife parts that were legally taken in another country. Equally important it would add yet another unfunded mandate on California Game Wardens and thus taking time and critical resources away from their ability to protect our native wildlife.

Furthermore, during the 2018 session you introduced very similar legislation, SB 1487. SB 1487 was actively opposed by the governments of South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and other African interests because the bill would have sharply reduced revenues generated by regulated safari hunters which would: 1) provide desperately needed benefits to the economies of substantially impoverished local rural communities; 2) serve as a needed incentive for local community-based habitat and wildlife conservation efforts; and 3) provide critical incentive for local communities to protect those species from local poachers.

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Ultimately, SB 1487 was vetoed by Governor Brown. In his veto message, Governor Brown stated:

“This bill establishes the Iconic African Species Protection Act, prohibiting the possession of dead specimens of several African animal species within California. SB 1487 imposes a state civil penalty for activities expressly authorized by the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Even though I share the sentiments of the author, this bill, if enacted, would be unenforceable.”

The CRPA would suggest that the California legislatures allow African Nations manage their own wildlife and instead focus legislative efforts that would protect California’s wildlife resources and the habitats they need to live and thrive. For the foregoing reasons, the California Rifle and Pistol Association opposes SB 1175.

Sincerely,
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