

By way of introduction my name is David Warther. My family has been working ivory for over 100 years here in Dover, Ohio. While my grandfather was an ivory carver my father started cutting ivory for craftsmen and artisans after he returned from WWII. Originally dad purchased ivory from importers but in the 1950's he found that by searching out antique collections of tusks here in the United States he could purchase higher quality ivory (aged material) at a much lower cost. Since then our family has been working in this recycled material. For those interested in an expanded history of ivory use and of the ivory trade in the US I refer you to the following article: <http://ivorybuyer.com/?page=Ivory%20History> .

In the 1980's and 1990's I expanded upon the business by networking with estate planners, estate lawyers and estate auction houses across the US in order to better source the old tusks in the U.S. and at the same time I expanded sales from the typical users of ivory in the knife and gun world into the areas of the restoration of antiques and in the making of musical instrument parts for both new and vintage instruments.

While this proposed ban on the sale of old existing ivory is the wrong thing to do from a wildlife management standpoint, it needs to be pointed out that the economic impact upon American craftsmen and artisans will be significant if this regulation is adopted, many will lose their livelihoods. It will also have a significant impact upon the owners of old ivory because their ivory will have lost its value. These are Americans who own everything from old elephant tusks in raw form to folks who own collections of canes, jewelry, pianos, cue sticks, knives, Sterling silver with ivory accent parts and many other items.

Within this scenario of ivory ownership you have a variety of economic dynamics and situations. At the first level in the chain you have people who own raw ivory tusks. Twenty five years ago, when the import ban was set into place, the US government estimated there were at least 100 tons of legal un-carved tusks in the United States. From my decades of experience I believe this estimate is very low. Ivory neither rots nor rusts, so it is common for me to run across tusks that have been in family ownership for several generations. I purchased one tusk that was documented to have been in the family hands since 1820. These tusks were legally brought to the U.S. by people from various backgrounds. They were brought here by missionaries, big game hunters, state department emissaries, oil field workers, military personnel who were once stationed in Africa, peace corps workers, and many others. In most cases these people do not sell their tusks, but leave them to their spouses, children and grandchildren, many of whom at some point in time decide to cash out their inheritance, often to fund unexpected expenses, medical care, etc.

The people who inherit tusks and who usually desire to sell them would be hit the hardest by a regulation that states you cannot sell tusks. These people are often widows who have inherited tusks. This regulation would deprive widows of the value of their inheritance.

I purchase these tusks and then cut them into a wide variety of forms for craftsmen to finish in their respective trades. In addition to myself, there are about half a dozen businessmen in the United States who make a living by providing ivory parts to these craftsmen. We all purchase pre-ban tusks from within the U.S. and we sell our ivory parts only within the U.S. This is the second level in the chain and my estimate is that combined we sell \$1.5 million worth of ivory

parts to American craftsmen. This regulation will completely destroy the livelihoods of these people and their families.

The third level is that of the men and women who work these ivory parts into a finished product. The value-added aspect of this work is considerable. A cue ferrule that I sell for \$20 is applied and finished on a cue stick for \$180.00. An investment of \$75 in a few ivory inlays and parts by a cue maker will take his/her \$300 cue stick to a value over \$1,000. A set of piano keys costing \$950 is applied by a skilled piano keyboard restoration expert who then receives \$4,000 for his/her work. These artisans cannot compete by replacing key tops with plastic tops because there are several businesses set up to re-cover the keys with plastic, complete with labor, for \$150. There are people in many trades who rely on ivory to boost their product value to a level where they can make a decent living in that trade, but without ivory their work is not profitable enough to make them a living. A professional cue maker, without ivory, will become a home hobbyist cue maker. Professional scrimshaw artists will all lose their jobs. The Nantucket basket industry will become a hobby business for a few people rather than a living business for dozens of families. My estimate is there are about 300 people in America on this third level who will lose their incomes if this regulation is put into place.

The fourth level is that of these items moving in trade among buyers, collectors and retail shops. By way of example it is common knowledge that a new ivory piano key frame will increase the value of a vintage instrument by \$7,000 to \$10,000. Also in this fourth level you have many shops and dealers in antiques and vintage instruments where the owner buys and sells, only scratching by, but he/she relies on finding one or two guitars per year that have a value of \$50,000 or more in order to stay in business and make a living. Also included in this level are the untold number of antique dealers who have ivory on their antiques or have antiques made completely or mostly of ivory. I would not be qualified to estimate the number of people working at this level who would be negatively affected by this regulation, but it would be a very large number of small businesses.

The fifth level is that of collectors. There are many men and women who have significant investments in ivory art and items of ivory. They have made these investments with the underlying belief that their government would never ban a pre-ban material because their government had never banned the sale of materials and substances that were legally imported. To do this is so ludicrous that it never was part of the mental makeup of collectors.

Collections stand at every level of our income strata. There are poor people who own a single item of value with ivory on it and have always known that, if they had to, they could sell the item for money to pay bills or to buy food. From there you go up the income ladder to those who own millions of dollars worth of ivory collectibles. These are cane collectors, cue stick collectors, gun collectors, sterling silver collectors, knife collectors and the list goes on and on. This regulation destroys the value of the collections. Even if the items qualify for intrastate trade under this regulation, nobody will want to buy these items for fear they will not have ample evidence should the sale be investigated by the authorities. This regulation may allow for trade in some of these items, but the burden of proof of age and provenance is on the owner and, with questionable and for the most part unknown guidelines, this will put an end to the trade of these items and will hence destroy their value.

To summarize a typical path for ivory in the U.S. would be to say that a person like myself will purchase a 60-year-old elephant tusk from a little old widow lady who needs the money. By working with precision tooling this person is able to machine various parts from the tusk. A set of piano key tops will be among those items. The key top set sells for \$950 to a man or woman who specializes in ivory recovering work. Their labor and tooling costs results in a set of finished ivory key tops they are now able to sell for \$4,000. The piano rebuild shop pays them for their work because the new ivory covered tops allows the shop to sell a perfectly rebuilt piano for \$9,000 more than if it were covered in plastic. Governments at every level collect taxes on or as a result of these transactions. This type of supply chain is seen in every industry known to man. This regulation needlessly destroys this small but vital industry in America and it does nothing to protect elephants in Africa.