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Contact:

Senator Raymond Lesniak

Founder

The Lesniak Institute for American Leadership

lesniakrj@gmail.com • (862)-812-6756

Jen Samuel

Founder

Elephants DC

elephantsdc@gmail.com • (484)-868-8405

Legendary Statesman Calls on President Trump to Close Key Ivory Loophole by Executive Order to Save Elephants From Extinction

The Lesniak Institute and Elephants DC Urge Americans to Stop the Extinction of Elephants by Calling on the White House to Outlaw All ‘Antique’ Ivory Sales

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY — A national appeal urging President Donald J. Trump to close ‘antique’ ivory loophole via Executive Order has been launched by Former New Jersey Senator Raymond Lesniak — who championed the first law in the United States banning the sale of ivory — and Jen Samuel, founder of Elephants DC.

A decade ago, an executive decision on combating wildlife trafficking included a massive exemption for domestic and foreign ‘antique’ ivory sales; this loophole ensures tons of illegal ivory are sold yearly across America. New ivory can be artificially tarnished to easily look old, and only a scientific laboratory can determine the actual age of elephant ivory, a process that is highly expensive.

To date, New Jersey is the only state in America that has enacted a full and total ivory sales ban. This zero-tolerance legislation is key to closing the loopholes that ivory traders, buyers, and sellers around the world — including at home in America — use to launder newly poached, raw ivory into the marketplace under the guise of being an antique.

Elephants DC organized five international marches to the White House from 2013 to 2018, calling on the Obama administration to enact a complete ban on ivory sales and raising awareness of impending elephant extinction. The population declines across the continent are staggering. An elephant is killed every 15 minutes. Less than 240,000 elephants exist in Africa today — compared to 20 million elephants in 1826.

“Elephants are intelligent, sensitive, social, live with their families and need their mothers. But their very existence on earth is threatened by the ivory organized crime market which is responsible for the yearly slaughter of 30,000 elephants,” Lesniak said.

The international illicit ivory trade represents a critical and immediate vulnerability to global stability and American national security. While traditional conservation efforts treat wildlife trafficking strictly as an

environmental issue, this campaign establishes that the domestic "antique" ivory trade is actively weaponized by transnational organized crime (TCO) syndicates and global terrorist entities.

According to a 2026 report by the Institute for International Political Studies, ivory traffickers and terrorist cells frequently exist side-by-side. They share the same morally bankrupt middlemen, cross-border smuggling routes, and underground financial remittance networks along the East African coast and beyond.

The general antique market in the United States serves as the primary infrastructure to launder illicit blood ivory into the domestic economy. Trafficking networks utilize this unmonitored repository — estimated to hold a valuation range of \$10 Billion to \$30 Billion USD — as a mechanism for High-Value Storage. By converting poached ivory into unique, bespoke, or decorative artifacts, illicit networks create an elite, untraceable physical currency. This allows terrorist facilitators to move millions of dollars across international borders in a single container, completely bypassing the global banking system and all Anti-Money Laundering (AML) monitoring.

To dismantle this threat, Lesniak urges the White House to issue a National Security Directive via a no exceptions Executive Order to ban all transactions in ivory in the United States — closing the federal antique loophole once and for all.

“This campaign is entirely nonpartisan, uniting national security metrics with a profound ‘America First’ moral obligation. By treating this crisis as a direct national security imperative, the executive action overrides standard statutory limitations and institutes a zero-tolerance domestic market ban,” Samuel said. “This strategy builds directly upon the battle-tested ‘Gold Standard’ precedent established by the State of New Jersey in 2014.”

“From a humanitarian standpoint, the very survival of these beautiful, peaceful animals is at stake. From a national security standpoint, cutting off the funding of terrorist groups and organized crime organizations is at stake,” Lesniak adds.

Citizens are urged to execute two key direct steps to support the initiative:

- 1. Call the White House Comment Line at 202-456-1111. Ask the President to use his executive authority to treat the antique ivory loophole as a national security crisis and mandate a total commercial ban on decorative ivory.**
- 2. Write to First Lady Melania Trump. Thank her for her historic 2018 visit to the orphaned elephants at the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Kenya, and urge her to support this vital national security and conservation directive.**

Lesniak also encouraged people to contact members of Congress to demand a total sales ban on all elephant ivory trade.

“You can help by contacting the office of the President and your members of Congress to support a no exceptions Executive Order to end the ivory trade and stop the impending extinction of elephants on the face of the earth,” Lesniak said from the steps of the New Jersey State Senate on Friday, June 26th. “Take action and ensure America stops contributing to the impending, in not too distant future, extinction of elephants on the face of the earth.”

The campaign officially launches on July 3, 2026 with an all-new website featuring direct call-to-actions, resources, and a timeline tracing the historic journey to save elephants from extinction that began in New Jersey.

Take action, visit: www.SaveOurElephants.org.

#AbolishIvorySales