

Wildlife trafficking is the fourth largest transnational crime. Potential buyers may not even realize that they are taking part in this crime when elephant skin boots, turtle shell jewelry, lion skin rugs, giraffe skin wallets and more are just a few computer clicks away or in specialty stores throughout Maryland.

The federal government has cracked down on ivory and some other animal parts, but commerce within the states is not controlled by these regulations. Maryland has no specific law restricting wildlife products, so these items continue to circulate within our state. What's more, Baltimore is one of only thirteen certified antiques ports in the U.S., which means that illegal items disguised as "antiques" flow through our port on a regular basis.

In 2019, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service processed 191,492 declared shipments of wildlife and wildlife products worth more than \$4.3 billion. That's only the declared shipments. Illegal wildlife trafficking generates \$20 billion a year for terrorists and other nefarious organizations, and conservation groups have estimated that the authorities catch only 10% of illegal ivory at U.S. borders.

In this anthropogenic age of climate change, we need to think carefully about how our choices affect our grandchildren. Bringing keystone species to extinction for exotic knick knacks cannot be condoned.

We can be part of the solution in Maryland by passing a law that will complement federal wildlife trafficking statutes. New York, New Jersey, and Washington, DC already have laws in place. We must pass a statewide law so that the Port of Baltimore does not become the new hub for illegal wildlife trafficking.

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