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**PBA of NEW YORK STATE OFFERS TESTIMONY AIMED AT SAVING ENDANGERED ANIMALS  
Environmental Conservation Officers Union Supports Legislation to  
Strengthen Penalties for Illegal Ivory Sales**

The PBA of NYS today announced it supports the efforts of Assemblyman Robert Sweeney to curtail the slaughter of African and Indian elephants and other exotic animals by advancing legislation to restrict the sale of ivory and other exotic materials in New York.

Cynthia Harcher, a Region 3 investigator for the state Department of Environmental Conservation, will testify on behalf of the PBA of NYS before the Assembly Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation at a New York City-based hearing. Harcher, a 26-year veteran of the DEC's Division of Law Enforcement, has been an investigator since 2008 and has conducted investigations involving the illegal ivory trade.

"New York has the largest market for ivory in the United States," Harcher said. "However, the mere possession of ivory is not a crime, but simply a violation, carrying a maximum fine of \$250. A person would have more significant legal problems if they were ticketed for speeding on the Thruway than they would if they were arrested for possessing tusks, jewelry and charms carved from ivory."

Certain types of ivory sales are legal in New York, and they are regulated by the DEC. However, elephants are killed in great numbers, primarily for their ivory tusks, to feed a large global black market. New York City is a known destination of illegal ivory imports, and serves as a hub for U.S. distribution.

Throughout the world, groups have formed to stop illegal ivory poaching and trading. Estimates vary, but it is believed between 22,000 and 35,000 African elephants are killed each year for their ivory.

Nations combat the black market and raise awareness of the slaughters using a variety of tactics, including the removal of the product from the marketplace and destroying the ivory. Last fall, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service crushed six tons of confiscated ivory.

The PBA of NYS encourages the state to intensify the fight here in New York.

"Ultimately, it is our job to protect the state from poachers and polluters," said PBA of NYS Executive Director Daniel De Federicis. "The PBA is encouraging the governor and the Legislature to take all necessary actions to staff the DEC's Division of Law Enforcement to a level to investigate these crimes and put the criminals who are ultimately responsible for the continued slaughtering of elephants and other endangered species behind bars."

*The PBA of New York State is the exclusive bargaining agent for the New York State University (SUNY) Police, the New York State Environmental Conservation Police, the New York State Park Police, and the New York State Forest Rangers. Our members police and protect New York State's public universities and colleges; state parks and historic sites; and they enforce state laws and protect our lands and forests and ensure environmental safety and quality throughout the state.*