

# WASHINGTON ANIMAL RESEARCH NETWORK

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The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

As members of the biomedical research community and with a primary mission of improving the quality of life of people and animals, we the undersigned write to express our concern and objection to the Great Ape Protection Act (GAPA, H.R. 1326). As you may know, H.R. 1326 would ban all research involving chimpanzees. Although the number of chimpanzees essential to biomedical research is very few, chimpanzees remain the only valid research model for developing vaccines that prevent infection from the hepatitis C virus, from which millions of people worldwide suffer.

Researchers do not embark upon the use of chimpanzees in research without due consideration, and are acutely aware of the ethical challenges and moral responsibilities of such research. But the fact remains that chimpanzee models have led to major medical advances; as a case in point, thanks to chimpanzee research, there are vaccines for hepatitis A and B. And as reported in the December 3, 2009 online issue of *Science*, the prestigious journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a new treatment developed from research with chimpanzees holds great promise for people who already are infected with hepatitis C virus, although more pre-clinical work with chimpanzees is required before clinical trials can begin. It is important to note that chimpanzees in U.S. research and breeding programs are not euthanized when they are no longer involved in research programs. Rather, they are humanely maintained in social groups with a high level of medical care and enrichment until their natural deaths. In fact, there is a federally funded sanctuary system in place to provide for chimpanzee retirement. Chimpanzees in captivity normally live to 30-45 years old, so the costs associated with their care and housing are substantial.

Preventing research with chimpanzees would slow or eliminate urgently needed research. And in the midst of the Congressional debate about health care, it is worth noting that according to the CDC, 3.2 million Americans are infected with hepatitis C virus, which is the leading cause of liver transplantation and is responsible for 10,000 to 20,000 deaths per year in the U.S. A vaccine for hepatitis C would

decrease the number of hospital visits and the otherwise necessary medical treatment for tens of thousands of people in the U.S., thereby decreasing health care costs. Scientists also rely on chimpanzee models for the development of vaccines for malaria, human cytomegalovirus, respiratory syncytial virus, and some forms of cancer. According to the CDC, human cytomegalovirus is the most common congenital infection in the U.S. and causes one child to become disabled every hour. Respiratory syncytial virus is the major cause of lower respiratory tract infections in infants and children.

Passage of GAPA would inhibit medical advances and the research community's quest to improve human health through new treatments and vaccines for the treatment and prevention of disease. On behalf of the biomedical research community, healthcare providers, and patients, we ask you to support our Nation's commitment to biomedical research and to oppose H. R. 1326, the Great Ape Protection Act.

Respectfully,

**American Association of Anatomists (AAA)**

**American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS)**

**American Society for Microbiology (ASM)**

**American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET)**

**Americans for Medical Progress (AMP)**

**American Society of Laboratory Animal Practitioners (ASLAP)**

**Animal Health Institute (AHI)**

**Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)**

**Association of American Universities (AAU)**

**Association of Primate Veterinarians (APV)**

**Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO)**

**California Biomedical Research Association (CBRA)**

**California National Primate Research Center**

**Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)**

**National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR)**

**New England National Primate Research Center**

**New Jersey Association for Biomedical Research (NJABR)**

**Oregon Health & Science University**

**Oregon National Primate Research Center**

**Society for Neuroscience (SfN)**

**Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR)**

**Society of Toxicology (SOT)**

**Southwest National Primate Research Center (SNPRC)**

**Texas Society for Biomedical Research (TSBR)**

**The American Association of Immunologists (AAI)**

**The American Physiological Society**

**Tulane National Primate Research Center**

**Washington National Primate Research Center**

**Wisconsin National Primate Research Center**

**Yerkes National Primate Research Center**