

Fact Sheet

Protect Chimpanzees

Support the Great Ape Protection Act (H. R. 1326 / S. 3694)

The Great Ape Protection Act (H.R. 1326 / S. 3694) was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Edolphus Towns (D-NY), Rep. David Reichert (R-WA), Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI), and Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD), and in the U.S. Senate by Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). This bill protects our closest living relative by (1) phasing out the use of chimpanzees in invasive research, (2) requiring the permanent retirement of the 500 government-owned chimpanzees currently held in research laboratories to suitable sanctuaries, and (3) making the current permanent moratorium on government-funded breeding of chimpanzees statutory.

About 1,000 chimpanzees—some who were captured from the wild, used by the entertainment industry or kept as pets—currently live in six biomedical research and testing laboratories across the United States. Despite extensive knowledge of their rich social and emotional lives and their ineffectiveness as models for human diseases like HIV, chimpanzees continue to be subjected to painful and invasive experiments – some for over 50 years now. At any given time, the vast majority of chimpanzees aren't being used in active research protocols and end up languishing in laboratories for decades, wasting millions of taxpayer dollars. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has already decided to permanently end the funding for breeding of federally-owned and supported chimpanzees for research – it's high time to finally end this wasteful and poor treatment of our closest living and endangered relatives.

Why should we give special attention to chimpanzees?

What we know about these animals should serve as a wake-up call. They exhibit a range of emotions including pleasure, depression, anxiety, pain, distress, empathy and grief. Chimpanzees are very social, highly intelligent, and proficient in tool use, problem solving, and numerical skills and can even learn American Sign Language. But that's not all. Their intelligence and ability to experience emotions so similar to humans bolster the argument that chimpanzees intensely suffer under laboratory conditions. In fact, in 1997, a National Research Council report concluded that chimpanzees should be afforded special consideration, on ethical grounds, over all other animals, and that euthanasia is not an acceptable means of "population control."

What is causing the recent decline in the use of chimpanzees for biomedical research and testing?

Fortunately, the scientific community and others have decreased the use of chimpanzees both nationally and internationally due to:

- High costs of keeping chimpanzees in laboratories
- Serious ethical concerns
- Unsuitability of chimpanzees as research models for humans
- Public pressure

How much will the federal government save through passage of H. R. 1326?

Over \$170 million taxpayer dollars could be saved by retiring the 500 federally-owned chimpanzees to sanctuaries and tens of millions more through the prohibition on breeding and invasive research. The federal government spends an estimated \$63 million each year on chimpanzee maintenance and experiments. The estimated expense of simply maintaining one chimpanzee in a laboratory is up to \$67 per day. This high cost works to the chimpanzees' advantage, as it is one reason their use in research has been severely declining.

What is life like for chimpanzees in the laboratory?

The Humane Society of the United States recently conducted an undercover investigation into the world's largest chimpanzee laboratory - New Iberia Research Center (NIRC) in Louisiana. Our investigator revealed individual housing of chimpanzees, resulting in chimps suffering from depression, heightened aggression, frustration and even self-mutilation. Chimpanzees used in research, including those at NIRC, are often subjected to many painful and distressing procedures including numerous liver biopsies, isolation from others for long spans of time, injection of human viruses, and frequent "knockdowns" in which chimpanzees are shot with a dart gun of anesthetic. In the wild, chimpanzees live in very diverse social groups and travel several miles in one day. However, in some research protocols, chimpanzees are forced to live alone in cold, metal cages approximately the size of a small closet.

Frequently Asked Questions About Chimpanzee Research

Question: Will biomedical research come to an end if chimpanzees cannot be used?

Response: Chimpanzees represent only 0.004% of the 25 million animals used in biomedical research and testing every year due to ethical concerns and the extremely high cost of keeping them in laboratories. Because of this, experiments involving chimpanzees can only involve sample sizes so small that their ability to test the safety and effectiveness of new drugs is extremely limited.

Question: Are chimpanzees needed for hepatitis research?

Response: While chimpanzees have contributed to some advancement in hepatitis research and treatments, research shows that their use isn't critical. In vitro study methods have come a long way in recent years and should now be the preferred method to study hepatitis.

Question: Have major medical advances been made through research that could have only been done with chimpanzees?

Response: In the past, scientists were limited by the available methods for conducting basic and applied scientific research, and they, indeed, relied heavily on animal models to provide clues about human medical conditions and treatments. Scientists now have at their disposal an array of research options, including those that lead to more human-specific results.

Question: Is chimpanzee research necessary in order to reduce the risks to the general human population?

Response: Due to the high cost and ethical considerations involved in using chimpanzees in experiments, they often involve a minute sample size (sometimes only one chimpanzee). Such small numbers of chimpanzees are used that the studies have very limited ability to predict the safety and effectiveness of new medical treatments in the human population. On sheer economic and utilitarian grounds, chimpanzees are poor surrogates for human safety studies.

Question: Chimpanzees are genetically closer to humans than any other animal; therefore does this make them an obvious choice as a model to study human diseases?

Response: While it's true that chimpanzees share approximately 98 percent of our DNA, that small difference accounts for some major differences in immunity and disease progression. For instance, chimpanzees largely failed as a model for HIV because the virus does not make chimpanzees sick as it does to humans who progress to AIDS.

Question: Is the public supportive of an end to invasive biomedical research on chimpanzees?

Response: Opinion polls indicate growing public concern regarding the use of chimpanzees in biomedical research. For example, 54 percent of Americans believe that it is unacceptable for chimpanzees to "undergo research which causes them to suffer for human benefit."¹ Similarly, 52 percent of U.S. adults, in 2001², were opposed to research that causes pain and injury to dogs and chimpanzees – even if it produces new information about human health – compared to 30 percent in 1985³, and 71 % of Americans believe a chimpanzee who has been in a lab for 10 or more years should be retired.⁴

Question: Will chimpanzees be needed for future research?

Response: Historically, when diseases have arisen and chimpanzees have been used as a research model, they have failed. Chimpanzees have been shown time and again to be poor models for human diseases such as HIV, AIDS, cancer, and heart disease. The NIH has already signaled a movement away from using chimpanzees as a research model by permanently halting the breeding of chimpanzees for invasive research. We cannot justify wasting tens of millions of dollars a year to warehouse chimpanzees, with this history of failures and when there is research that needs financial support now.

To join as a cosponsor, please contact Megan Cornish (Towns) at x5-5936, Michelle Brennan (Reichert) at x5-7761, Paul Wolfe (Cantwell) at x4-3441, Ian Swanberg (Collins) at x4-2523, or Jami Westerhold (x4-5141). Thank you.

¹ 2001 poll conducted by Zogby International for the Chimpanzee Collaboratory

² 2001 poll conducted by the National Science Board

³ 1985 poll conducted by the National Science Board

⁴ 2006 poll conducted by the Humane Research Council