

Fact Sheet

Support the Great Ape Protection and Cost Savings Act (S. 810 / H.R. 1513)

The Great Ape Protection and Cost Savings Act – S. 810 / H.R. 1513 – has been introduced in the U.S. Senate by Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and in the U.S. House of Representatives by Reps. Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD), Steve Israel (D-NY), David Reichert (R-WA), Jim Langevin (D-RI), and Edolphus Towns (D-NY), along with a bipartisan list of nearly 40 additional original cosponsors. This bill saves taxpayers approximately \$300 million over the next decade and protects chimpanzees by (1) phasing out their use in invasive research, (2) requiring the permanent retirement of the 500 government-owned chimpanzees currently held in research laboratories to suitable sanctuaries, and (3) prohibiting the breeding of chimpanzees for invasive research. This bill has already garnered the broad, bipartisan support of more than 160 cosponsors in the 112th Congress.

About 950 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 in the United States. Despite extensive knowledge of their rich social and emotional lives and their ineffectiveness as models for human diseases, chimpanzees continue to be subjected to invasive experiments – some individuals for over 50 years now. At any given time, 80-90% of chimpanzees aren't being used in active research protocols and end up languishing in laboratories for decades, wasting millions of taxpayer dollars.

At the end of 2011, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released a much anticipated report, which concluded that nearly all biomedical research using chimpanzees is unnecessary. Further, the IOM committee could not identify a single area of research for which the use of chimpanzees is critical. These findings, coupled with the ethical and economic issues surrounding invasive chimpanzee research, signal that the Great Ape Protection and Cost Savings Act (GAPCSA) is needed to finally put an end to this practice.

Why should we give special attention to chimpanzees?

The documented cognitive and psychological abilities of these animals are profound. Chimpanzees exhibit a range of emotions including pleasure, depression, anxiety, pain, empathy and grief. They are very social, highly intelligent, and proficient in tool use, problem solving, and numerical skills; they can even learn American Sign Language. Chimpanzees can suffer intensely under laboratory conditions and studies have shown that some chimpanzees formerly used in research suffer from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. A 1997 National Research Council report concluded that chimpanzees should be afforded special consideration, on ethical grounds, 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 use of chimpanzees both nationally and internationally due to:

- High costs of keeping chimpanzees in laboratories
- Serious ethical and public concerns
- Unsuitability of chimpanzees as research models for humans
- The development of more effective and efficient alternatives

How much will the federal government save through passage of the Great Ape Protection and Cost Savings Act?

Ending invasive research on chimpanzees and transferring all of the government-owned chimpanzees to sanctuaries is the most cost effective and humane method of providing quality care for the these animals, and would save approximately 300 million taxpayer dollars over the next decade. Every federally owned chimpanzee born into the system amounts to more than a \$1 million commitment by the government—with an average cost of \$20,000 per chimp annually over a lifetime of up to 60 years.

What is life like for chimpanzees in the laboratory?

The Humane Society of the United States conducted an undercover investigation into the world's largest chimpanzee laboratory—New Iberia Research Center (NIRC) in Louisiana. Our investigator revealed chimpanzees housed alone in barren conditions, suffering from depression, heightened aggression, frustration and even self-mutilation. Those chimpanzees used in research, including at NIRC, are often subjected to repeated painful and distressing procedures including numerous liver biopsies, prolonged isolation in cages with floor space of 5 feet x 5 feet, and infection with human viruses. In the wild, chimpanzees live in very diverse social groups and can travel miles in one day.



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Frequently Asked Questions About Chimpanzee Research

Question: Will biomedical research produce results if chimpanzees cannot be used?

Response: The results of the IOM make it clear that chimpanzees are not essential to moving biomedical progress forward and are becoming increasingly irrelevant models for human disease thanks to scientific innovation which has led to increased availability and use of alternative study methods. Chimpanzees represent only 0.004% of the 25 million animals used in biomedical research and testing every year but the money spent to use and maintain these 950 animals is disproportionately high. These resources could be spent on more efficient and effective alternatives, which will help biomedical progress.

Question: Are chimpanzees needed for hepatitis C research?

Response: The IOM committee concluded that chimpanzees aren't needed to treat hepatitis C patients with drugs or vaccines. The two most recent treatments for hepatitis C to gain FDA approval were developed without the use of chimpanzees; as is the case with several promising treatments currently making their way through the pipeline. A combination of In vitro, in silico, epidemiological, human clinical and other study methods have come a long way in recent years and should now be the preferred method to study hepatitis and other human disease.

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 chimpanzees share approximately 98 percent of our DNA, that 2% genetic variation 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 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 90% of chimpanzees in laboratories today are more than 10 years old.

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 government owned and supported chimpanzees. We cannot justify wasting tens of millions of dollars a year to warehouse chimpanzees, with this history of failures and when there is more effective research that needs financial support now.

To join as a cosponsor, please contact Sallie Taylor (Bartlett) at x5-2721, Colleen Nguyen (Israel) at x5-3335, Paul Wolfe (Cantwell) at x4-3441, Jessica James (Collins) at x4-2523, or Ciel Haviland (Sanders) at 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