



Quality Life Through Research

# Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

## Member Societies

The American Physiological Society

American Society for Biochemistry  
and Molecular Biology

American Society for Pharmacology  
and Experimental Therapeutics

American Society for Investigative  
Pathology

American Society for Nutrition

The American Association of  
Immunologists

American Association of Anatomists

The Protein Society

Society for Developmental Biology

American Peptide Society

Association of Biomolecular  
Resource Facilities

The American Society for Bone and  
Mineral Research

American Society for Clinical  
Investigation

Society for the Study of  
Reproduction

Teratology Society

The Endocrine Society

The American Society of Human  
Genetics

Environmental Mutagen Society

International Society for  
Computational Biology

American College of Sports  
Medicine

Biomedical Engineering Society

Genetics Society of America

American Federation for Medical  
Research

Representing over 100,000  
biological and biomedical  
researchers.

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August 4, 2010

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C., 20510

The Honorable Bernard Sanders  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Senators Cantwell, Collins, and Sanders:

As the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States, representing 23 societies and over 100,000 scientists and engineers, FASEB is writing to urge you to withdraw your support for the *Great Ape Protection Act* (S 3694). As you know, the *Great Ape Protection Act* would ban biomedical research involving bonobos, gorillas, gibbons, orangutans, and chimpanzees. Even though the number of chimpanzees used in this research is very small, they remain the only valid research model for the development of vaccines that could prevent infection from the hepatitis C virus.

We recently addressed these issues in an editorial and stated that, “The *Great Ape Protection Act* would end the use of chimpanzees in biomedical research, grinding promising studies to a halt and unconscionably delaying the release of anti-viral therapies and a vaccine for chronic hepatitis C.” According to the Centers for Disease Control, upwards of 3.9 million Americans are infected with the hepatitis C virus, which is a leading cause of liver transplantation due to liver failure and is responsible for 10,000-20,000 deaths per year. 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 reducing health care costs.

Chimpanzee models have led to major medical advances. In a response to Congressman Brian Bilbray’s inquiry, Dr. Francis Collins, NIH Director, stated that, “Chimpanzees proved invaluable in developing the hepatitis A and B vaccines that are in use today.” He goes on to say that these vaccines have significantly reduced the frequency of infection of hepatitis A and B in the U.S. Research on great apes remains crucial for progress against other viruses including malaria, human cytomegalovirus, respiratory syncytial virus, and some forms of cancer.

Research involving chimpanzees is subject to rigorous oversight. Numerous laws, regulations, and voluntary accreditation organizations govern the humane treatment and environmental enrichment of chimps used in research. These laws ensure that chimpanzees are retired to a federally-funded sanctuary, where they are housed in social groups and provided with a high level of veterinary care until their natural

deaths. The *Great Ape Protection Act* would not only prohibit research that benefits humans, it would also prohibit research for the benefit of great apes. Chimpanzees and gorillas in the wild are threatened by the Ebola virus, and malignant malaria was recently identified in both captive and wild gorillas. If adopted, this bill will not only prevent the needed research for human diseases, but it will prevent research on chimpanzee and gorilla diseases – inevitably harming the ones the legislation seeks to protect.

Passage of the *Great Ape Protection Act* will inhibit medical advances and the research community's quest to improve human health through new treatments and vaccines. On behalf of the biomedical research community, we urge you not to introduce this misguided bill in the Senate.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William T. Talman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

William T. Talman, M.D.  
FASEB President