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NEW IOM REPORT ON HEPATITIS PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR OPPOSITION TO THE GREAT APE PROTECTION ACT

Bethesda, MD – “This new Institute of Medicine (IOM) [report](#) provides additional, concrete evidence for why we must oppose the Great Ape Protection Act (H.R. 1326),” stated Mark O. Lively, Ph.D., President of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). Referring to *Hepatitis and Liver Cancer: A National Strategy for Prevention and Control of Hepatitis B and C*, Lively continued, “Chimpanzees remain critical animal models for studies leading to a vaccine against hepatitis C, and this report strongly recommends that research to develop a vaccine continue. Passage of a bill that would halt progress on what the IOM calls “a serious public health problem” is simply unacceptable.”

According to the IOM, in the United States alone 2.7-3.9 million people are chronically infected with hepatitis C, referred to in the report as a “silent killer,” leading to liver cancer, cirrhosis, and approximately 12,000 deaths per year. Worldwide, 350,000 deaths are attributed to hepatitis C-related liver disease each year. The IOM found that three to five times more people in the U.S. are living with chronic viral hepatic infection than with HIV, for a direct healthcare related cost of \$1.8 billion when last calculated in 1997. Many infected individuals unknowingly received the virus through medically-necessary blood transfusions. Veterans have a higher prevalence of hepatitis C infection, although it is estimated that 75% of those in the U.S. infected with hepatitis C are unaware of their infection status.

“The vaccine for hepatitis B, whose use the IOM recommends expanding, was developed using chimpanzees, and they are currently the only animal model, other than humans, suitable to discover new vaccines and therapies for the devastating scourge of hepatitis C,” stated Lively. “The Great Ape Protection Act would end all biomedical research using chimpanzees. Although the number of these animals used in research is very small and highly regulated, they are an invaluable resource, and elimination of their use would have devastating consequences for millions suffering from hepatitis and related diseases.”

FASEB is calling on all of its member society scientists to contact their Representatives in opposition to the Great Ape Protection Act. “Members of Congress need to understand the public health implications of supporting this legislation,” Lively asserted. “We hope they will pay serious attention to IOM’s report and realize that sponsorship of the Great Ape Protection Act is antithetical to protecting our nation’s health.”

To view the FASEB alert, please visit: <http://capwiz.com/faseb/issues/alert/?alertid=14541941>

FASEB is composed of 22 societies with more than 90,000 members, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. FASEB enhances the ability of biomedical and life scientists to improve—through their research—the health, well-being and productivity of all people. Our mission is to advance health and welfare by promoting progress and education in biological and biomedical sciences through service to our member societies and collaborative advocacy.