

November 4, 2009

Dear Representative:

The undersigned scientific and professional societies, patient advocacy organizations, and research institutions write to express our concern that the Great Ape Protection Act (GAPA, H.R. 1326) will harm medical research that benefits both humans and great apes. The research community is strongly committed to ensuring that the highest quality of humane care is maintained for all animals used in research, that animals are housed and maintained under conditions appropriate to their species, and that research involves only the minimum number of animals required to obtain valid results. However, this bill would halt ongoing biomedical research into such diseases as hepatitis C for which no other animal model exists.

Chimpanzees are a unique and invaluable resource for ethically conducted biomedical research, particularly translational research through which scientific discoveries are advanced into treatments and cures. Not only has such research contributed significantly to the development of vaccines for hepatitis A and B and discovery of HIV, but chimpanzees remain critical animal models in the development of vaccines and treatments for hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS, cancer, and malaria, as well as a number of other deadly and debilitating diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control, currently more than 3.2 million people in the United States are infected with hepatitis C, a disease for which there is no viable alternative to chimpanzees for research purposes.

In addition, we are concerned that GAPA will negatively affect research that directly benefits the apes themselves, such as development of an Ebola vaccine to protect chimpanzees in the wild, or cardiovascular research aimed at helping gorillas in captivity.

Passage of GAPA would cause irreparable damage to our ability to find treatments and create vaccines for the deadly diseases of today, as well as severely hampering our ability to respond to the emerging infections of tomorrow. Scientists take research using non-human primates extremely seriously, and multiple protections exist in law and through accreditation to ensure these animals are well-treated and used with respect. For the health of our nation and the true protection of great apes, we urge you to oppose the Great Ape Protection Act.

American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Anatomists
American Association for Laboratory Animal Science
American Liver Foundation
American Physiological Society
American Psychological Association
American Society for Investigational Pathology
Americans for Medical Progress
Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology
American Society for Bone and Mineral Research
American Society of Human Genetics
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
National Primate Research Centers
Society for Neuroscience
Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research