

**Ignorance can no longer be used as an excuse.**

## Let This Be a Time of Equality in American History

**Congress should cease funding all research on chimpanzees.** Funds should be reallocated for their permanent retirement. Only such action can approximate justice. The chimpanzee issue challenges Congress to lead; it challenges our beliefs about equality.

*Chimpanzees can read.*

It's true that they can't read very well, and they're not as gifted in language as we are, but their mental capabilities challenge our traditional belief that humans alone are capable of such feats.

*Chimpanzees can speak with us in sign language.*

Our own amazing language abilities have allowed us to bridge a seemingly uncrossable communication divide. But the discovery that we can communicate in our own language with another species should cause us to reconsider our tradition-based beliefs and the morality and behaviors they engender. Right now, we act as if chimpanzee lives matter, just not very much.

**The federal government's recent actions suggest that Congress believes**

**that harming chimpanzees in research is worthy of taxpayer support.**

The national policy on chimpanzees, such as it is, is confused. Passage of P.L. 106-551, the Chimpanzee Health Improvement, Maintenance, and Protection Act, allocated funds to retire 'surplus' chimpanzees. No similar program has been suggested for *any other species*. The ethically important similarities between humans and chimpanzees are widely acknowledged. Passage of the law was supported by an acknowledgment from the National Institutes of Health that there may be too many chimpanzees in U.S. tax-supported laboratories.<sup>1</sup> But simultaneously, NIH is allocating more funds to support the chimpanzee experimentation program.<sup>2</sup>

The global research community has tacitly acknowledged that chimpanzees are so similar to humans that experiments using them can hardly be justified. In Europe, only six chimpanzees remain assigned to a single research project; the rest are being retired to sanctuaries. Research using them is banned in Great Britain and New Zealand. Here, the U.S. government owns or controls most of the approximately 1400 chimpanzees available for research. (This is a small number of animals. Compare this with the 50,000 monkeys, the 70,000 dogs, and the 20 to 30 million rats and mice used *annually* in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> Also of note, is the fact that the overwhelming major-

ity of these chimpanzees have been, and are being, held simply in case a 'need' for them arises.) Throughout the world, the moral and ethical realities seem to be overtaking the claims regarding any necessity of using these animals.

A very few philosophers and scientists continue to argue that chimpanzees and other primates are so unlike us that *certain* harm to them is justified by *any* chance of benefit to us. But those arguments are convoluted or mean spirited and reminiscent of the Southern intellectual defense of slavery. The more common view is that humans and chimpanzees are much alike.

Chimpanzees live to be nearly as old as humans. They form long-lasting relationships with each other. They make and use tools, they teach their children how to use tools. They pass their simple cultures down from generation to generation. Chimpanzees are intensely emotional, as are all primates. They laugh, they hoot, they mourn.

One remarkable human gift is our ability to imagine justice based on compassion and inclusiveness. Our hearts have led us to claim equality for those unequal in many other ways. No matter how smart, how literate, how creative one might be, we extend the basic right of freedom from harm by another to all. We continue to break down the barriers built on prejudice. Only tradition and the bigotry

The Congressional Educator is mailed quarterly to members of Congress.

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*Persons are encouraged to send a copy of this document to their representatives.*

### ***How Many Chimpanzees Are Available to Researchers in the U.S.? <sup>3</sup>***

University of Louisiana at Lafayette	368
Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research	250
National Institutes of Health (NIH)/Holloman Air Force Base	241
Emory University (Yerkes)	190
University of Texas	154
Primate Foundation of Arizona	76
Bioqual (Rockville, Maryland)	63
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)	14
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)	11

***Total Available Chimpanzees***

***1367***

of a few vested interests keep us from reaching across the barrier of species – a barrier to justice maintained only by greed and the pre-scientific myth of mankind’s metaphysical superiority to all else.

National policy in this arena is crying for leadership from outside the vested economic concerns. Members of Congress are personally and particularly responsible for the nation’s continuing failure to address the important ethical questions raised by the complex minds within the

animals being experimented on in the United States.

The mental and emotional similarity between chimpanzees and humans makes our continuing use and warehousing of these animals indefensible. It is time for a change. It is time for leadership.

***Congress should cease funding all research on chimpanzees. Funds should be allocated for the permanent retirement of all chimpanzees.***

Let this be the time of equality in American history. Let our children look back on today with the same relief and pride that we ourselves now feel when we look back on past inequities and see our moral progress reflected in our revulsion to those moments most obscene. Let this be the time when the United States Congress leads the way to basic legal protections for all those who can suffer, as we ourselves are wont to do.

It is possible.

**Notes:**

(1) John Strandberg, *Prepared Statement on H.R. 3514. National Center for Research Resources, National Institutes of Health. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Health and Environment of the Committee on Commerce. U.S. House of Representatives. May 18, 2000.*

(2) University of Louisiana at Lafayette, “Expansion of NIH Chimpanzee Holding Facility,” (Grant 1C06RR016483-01); \$1,975,176. (2002). And, “Establishment/Maintenance of Biomedical Research Colony (Grant 5U42RR015087-03); \$843,593. (2002).

University of Texas, “Establishment/Maintenance of Biomedical Research Colony, MD Anderson Cancer Center.” (Grant 1C06RR017724-01); \$1,959,906 (2002). And, “Organized Research, Veterinary Science: Extramural Research Facilities Construction Projects.” (Grant 5U42RR015090-03); \$5,155,254 (2002).

(3) No one knows with absolute certainty. The table represents the most currently available data drawn from official documents from NIH and the facilities named. Most of these animals are not being used in research.

(4) United States Department of Agriculture. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, APHIS. “Animal Welfare Report: Fiscal Year 2001. Report of the Secretary of Agriculture to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.” Appendix.