

# The Congressional Educator

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**An ever-increasing body of scientific evidence demonstrates that monkeys possess every mental faculty we are able to name in humans. Humans are much smarter than monkeys, but beyond that, salient differences appear impossible to identify. We probably experience the world in much the same way.**

## Hush Money

Dr. Jennifer Hess, a veterinarian at the University of Wisconsin's NIH National Primate Research Center who had complained that monkeys were being treated "cruelly and improperly," received a quarter of a million dollars in taxpayer money last year to settle her wrongful termination lawsuit against the university. Her settlement came with the stipulation that she not discuss "certain University documents" or contact the media regarding her concerns about the monkeys being experimented on at the Primate Center.

Hess was dismissed following her repeated attempts to improve the conditions and veterinary care of the monkeys at the Wisconsin center. Her efforts and concern were not appreciated.

*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.

The story was brought to light in a February 20, 2004 news story in Madison's weekly newspaper, *The Isthmus*:

In her depositions, Hess said her suggestions for proper animal care were sometimes "met with derision." Researchers pushed her to change veterinary records and "on more than one occasion" altered the records themselves. She also felt pressure to approve "inherently unethical" experimentation on ailing animals.

Once, when Hess wanted a monkey to regain some weight "before it went back into experiment," she said a researcher snapped, "If you don't

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***We all operate in the same way.***

**Joseph Kemnitz, Director  
Wisconsin National Primate  
Research Center  
March 1998  
*The Progressive***

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let me put her into experiment, I'm going to headcap another animal," from the center's colony of 1,300 "non-human primates."

Headcapping, Hess explained, is a "nasty procedure" in which the monkey's "skull is removed and the headcap is put in place of a skull and there's a hole in the top of the head."

Her lawsuit described the "neglect and cruel and improper treatment" of the monkeys she witnessed during her tenure.

## A System Out of Control

The problems brought to light in the Hess case are a longstanding and ubiquitous feature of the entire NIH-supported primate research endeavor. Evidence demonstrates that the monkeys held in the nation's publicly-

funded laboratories routinely suffer.

In every case that has come to light regarding neglect and cruelty, the oversight mechanisms have failed to work. The abuses have existed even as the USDA and the local animal care committees have certified that the facilities are in compliance with applicable federal regulations such as the Animal Welfare Act.

The problems identified by Hess should signal Congress that the current system of local and federal oversight has failed miserably. It must not be relied upon any longer. The long history of this failure demonstrates a high likelihood that such laboratories cannot be operated in a humane manner.

## An Obdurate Culture

Researchers like those at Wisconsin and throughout the system, are inured to the animals' suffering. Distain for critics and any and all criticism of the system has led to an arrogant and blind acceptance of any and all neglect or cruelty.

Tenured professors and other recipients of federal grants routinely dismiss requests for public discussions of these matters. These recipients of the public largess are protected from community concerns by the financial support given to them by a distant and uninformed Congress.

Shortly after the Hess settlement was made public, another ex-employee of the Wisconsin Primate Center wrote:

I worked as a work-study student for a Post Doc from 1995-1998. I worked with infant rhesus and mothers. We also had an offshoot study in geriatric females.

It was horrible. Hellacious. I can't even begin to tell you what went on. Unsupervised undergrads losing their tempers and beating on monkeys while they were in a metal

squeeze restraint. Monkeys with prolapsed uteruses waiting for hours for vet attention. Insane stereotypy that resulted in monkeys balding, chewing themselves and injuring others.

All the while, the PhDs had the most insanely petty battles going on, to the point where our research group was mocked and taunted in the hallways.

## **Nothing to hide?**

Students at the University of Utah recently requested documents regarding experiments on monkeys taking place at their university. In spite of the fact that citizens across the country have been provided similar records upon request – at a nominal fee, sometimes for free – the University of Utah has decided that the students should be charged hundreds of dollars for copies of public records.

Federal oversight has failed, local oversight has failed, and now universities are working diligently to build roadblocks to open public access to information regarding the research being funded at taxpayer expense. Utah joins the ranks of other recipients of public funding which refuse to provide documents related to experiments on monkeys at their institutions, such as Emory and Harvard universities.

Congress should act to assure that the public has free and open access to all protocols and records having to do with animal experimentation. Democracy can work only when the electorate is fully informed.

## **Little to show but pain and suffering.**

These facilities have produced nothing of value. Upon close inspection, their claims about discoveries they have contributed to turn out to be little more than self-aggrandizing propaganda. They have contributed pitifully little to human health care and have consumed public resources that should have been reserved for meaningful scientific studies of humans and human disease.

Congress owes the American public the assurance that public funds are not being spent in ways that cause routine severe suffering. Currently, Congress is not meeting this responsibility.

**Congress should move to close this cruel and wasteful system with all due haste. Urgency is called for.**

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