



October 30, 2019

Deborah Kearsse  
Director, Division of Program Integrity  
National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
Office of Management Assessment  
6011 Executive Blvd., Suite 601, MSC 7669  
Rockville, MD 20852

Via email: [deborah.kearsse@nih.gov](mailto:deborah.kearsse@nih.gov)

Dear Ms. Kearsse,

On behalf of White Coat Waste Project (WCW) and its more than 2 million members and supporters, I am writing to request an investigation into violations of federal spending transparency law by all seven taxpayer-funded National Primate Research Centers (NPRC). The violations in question relate to wasteful and cruel primate tests funded by NIH grants totaling \$118 million.

**Press releases about wasteful taxpayer-funded primate experiments**

WCW has compiled and analyzed press releases published by the seven NPRCs in 2018 and 2019 describing wasteful and cruel taxpayer-funded experiments including:

1. *Monkeys subjected to surgically-induced heart attacks*
  - Washington National Primate Research Center, University of Washington
2. *Monkeys addicted to alcohol*
  - Oregon National Primate Research Center, Oregon Health and Science University
3. *Monkeys exposed to biological weapons*
  - Tulane National Primate Research Center, Tulane University
4. *Monkeys subjected to crippling brain damage*
  - Yerkes National Primate Research Center, Emory University
5. *Monkeys intentionally threatened by humans to induce fear and anxiety*
  - California National Primate Research Center, University of California-Davis
6. *Monkeys subjected to psychological experiments*
  - Southwest National Primate Research Center, Texas Biomedical Research Institute
7. *Monkeys' skulls drilled into and injected with the ADHD drug Ritalin*
  - Wisconsin National Primate Research Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison

## White Coat Waste Project

PO Box 26029 • Washington, DC 20001 • [www.WhiteCoatWaste.org](http://www.WhiteCoatWaste.org)

*A bipartisan coalition of 2 million+ liberty-lovers and animal-lovers opposed to the government's wasteful spending on animal experiments. Taxpayers shouldn't be forced to pay \$15 billion+ for wasteful government animal experiments.*

The attached table includes details about the press releases and associated studies. A review of the NIH's federal research database indicates that the grants associated with the projects above received a combined \$118 million in taxpayer funding in their most recent funding period. These seven facilities together confine over 22,000 primates for use in wasteful experiments opposed by most Americans.

### **Violations of federal spending transparency law by all seven NPRCs**

As you may be aware, long-standing federal spending transparency law—known as the Stevens Amendment—requires that any press releases or statements describing taxpayer-funded projects under the Departments of Education, Labor and Health and Human Services (HHS) must include, “(1) the percentage of the total costs of the program or project which will be financed with Federal money; (2) the dollar amount of Federal funds for the project or program; and (3) percentage and dollar amount of the total costs of the project or program that will be financed by non-governmental sources.”<sup>1</sup>

*The aforementioned press releases about wasteful taxpayer-funded primate experiments fail to comply with the provisions of this law by not reporting the dollar amount of taxpayer funding spent on the projects, the percentage of the projects paid with Federal funds or the amount of private funding received.*

Based upon our review of NPRC press releases, the violations extend well beyond the examples highlighted in this complaint.

### **Systemic spending transparency failures by NIH grantees**

The current examples are troubling, and are a symptom of a broader problem. A report co-authored by WCW found widespread violations of the Stevens Amendment by NIH grant-receiving institutions performing wasteful animal experiments. An analysis of 100 press releases reporting taxpayer-funded projects worth nearly a quarter-billion-dollars found that not a single one complied with the Stevens Amendment. One noncompliant press release promoted an NIH-funded project that has received \$3.75 million in taxpayer funds to, among other things, simulate what it would sound like for a monkey to say “Will you marry me?” in English.<sup>2</sup>

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit that followed the release of WCW's report—after being requested by current Senators Ron Johnson (R-WI), James Lankford (R-OK), Rand Paul (R-KY) and Joni Ernst (R-IA)—cited our troublesome findings and wrote that, “NIH officials stated that they do not specifically monitor for Stevens Amendment compliance.”<sup>3,4</sup>

The GAO recommended that HHS (including NIH) begin enforcing the law, and HHS stated that it “would direct all operating divisions to design a process for implementing and monitoring the Stevens Amendment and would update HHS grants policy to reflect this new process” and that it “would address any non-compliance issues if they were raised.”

Unfortunately, it appears NIH and its grantees continue to violate the law with impunity despite it being included in the NIH Grants Policy Statement under the heading “Acknowledgment of Federal Funding” and the NIH issuing notices specifically reminding grantees of this transparency mandate.<sup>5,6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sec 505 of the Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019 (Public Law 115-245)

<sup>2</sup> <https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2017/04/25/new-report-ivy-league-flunks-on-spending-transparency/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2019/03/14/feds-confirms-wcw-report-on-animal-testing-transparency-violations-propose-reforms/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-282>

<sup>5</sup> [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps/html5/section\\_4/4.2.1\\_acknowledgement\\_of\\_federal\\_funding.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps/html5/section_4/4.2.1_acknowledgement_of_federal_funding.htm)

<sup>6</sup> <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-19-030.html>

To stem this rampant noncompliance and improve transparency about federal spending, Iowa Senator Joni Ernst introduced the Cost Openness and Spending Transparency (COST) Act (S. 807) to require that all recipients of federal funds abide by the conditions of the Stevens Amendment and giving the Office of Management and Budget the authority to withhold funding for noncompliance.<sup>7</sup>

Because of ongoing concerns about a lack of transparency about the cost and other details about NIH's primate testing, the House of Representatives also has passed language in the FY2020 Labor-HHS spending bill directing the NIH to produce a report on its primate experimentation program, including project costs.<sup>8</sup>

**Request for action**

For 30 years since the Stevens Amendment was first passed, recipients of NIH funding have been legally required to clearly disclose the cost of their projects so taxpayers are aware of how their hard-earned money is being spent. Yet, evidence shows ongoing, widespread violations of this common-sense spending transparency law. The NIH has acknowledged this problem and pledged to address it.

We urge you to investigate the extensive violations documented in this letter and hold the NPRCs accountable for their failure to properly disclose funding details.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at [justin@whitecoatwaste.org](mailto:justin@whitecoatwaste.org) or 860-882-2492.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JG', written in a cursive style.

Justin Goodman, M.A.  
Vice President, Advocacy and Public Policy  
White Coat Waste Project

Enclosure.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116/congress/senate/bills/807>

<sup>8</sup> <https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2019/06/19/progress-funding-panel-directs-nih-to-cut-primate-testing/>



# National Primate Research Center Press Releases that Violate Federal Spending Transparency Law

TAXPAYER-FUNDED INSTITUTION	PRESS RELEASE TITLE	VIOLATES SPENDING DISCLOSURE LAW? <sup>9</sup>	STUDY DESCRIPTION	PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTED IN PRESS RELEASE	ASSOCIATED GRANTS & COST TO TAXPAYERS <sup>10</sup>
<b>1. California National Primate Research Center</b> Location: University of California-Davis	“Brain Molecule Identified as Key in Anxiety Model” <sup>11</sup>	Y	Young monkeys were locked alone in cages and subjected to “threatening” so-called “human intruder tests” meant to elicit fear and anxiety. They then underwent brain scans and invasive brain testing and were killed and dissected.	<a href="#">LINK</a>	\$726,585 in 2019 ( <a href="#">R01-MH046729</a> ) \$913,381 in 2019 ( <a href="#">R01-MH081884</a> ) \$10,429,997 in 2019 ( <a href="#">P51-OD011106</a> ) \$12,836,944 in 2019 ( <a href="#">P51-OD011107</a> ) 1,652,183 in 2015 ( <a href="#">P30-HD003352</a> )  <b>TOTAL: \$26,559,090</b>
<b>2. Oregon National Primate Research Center</b> Location: Oregon Health and Science University	“Heavy alcohol use stunts adolescent, young adult brain growth” <sup>12</sup>	Y	Monkeys were turned into alcoholics by locking them alone in cages, withholding water and other liquids from them to cause excessive thirst, and then giving the monkeys open access to alcohol during “22 h drinking sessions.” The monkeys were then classified as “binge drinkers,” “heavy drinkers,” or “very heavy drinkers” based on how much alcohol they consumed and their brains were scanned. The press release states some monkeys consumed the equivalent of “four beers per day.”	<a href="#">LINK</a>	\$441,039 in 2019 ( <a href="#">U01-AA-013510</a> ) \$1,103,587 in 2019 ( <a href="#">P60-AA-010760</a> ) \$513,307 in 2019 ( <a href="#">R24-AA-019431</a> ) \$13,153,537 in 2019 ( <a href="#">P51-OD-011092</a> ) \$170,617 in 2019 ( <a href="#">U24-AA-025473</a> )  <b>TOTAL: \$15,382,087</b>
<b>3. Southwest National Primate Research Center</b> Location: Texas Biomedical Research Institute	“Peering into Baboon Brains to Help Find New Treatments for Mental Illness” <sup>13</sup>	Y	Taxpayer-funded grant that plans to perform psychological experiments on baboons.	<a href="#">LINK</a>	\$227,564 in 2018 ( <a href="#">R21MH114154</a> ) \$9,362,949 in 2019 ( <a href="#">P51RR013986</a> )  <b>TOTAL: \$9,590,513</b>

<sup>9</sup> Sec 505 of the Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019 (Public Law 115-245) (also known as the Stevens Amendment)

<sup>10</sup> This column lists all grants identified as a funding source in the published paper associated with each press release. The dollar figures reflect the most recent funding year for each grant.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/brain-molecule-identified-key-anxiety-model>

<sup>12</sup> <https://news.ohsu.edu/2019/04/01/heavy-alcohol-use-stunts-adolescent-young-adult-brain-growth>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.txbiomed.org/news-press/news-releases/peering-into-baboon-brains-to-help-treat-mental-illness/>

<p><b>4. Tulane National Primate Research Center</b> Location: Tulane University</p>	<p>“New drug shows promise against deadly ricin toxin”<sup>14</sup></p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Monkeys were exposed to the biological weapon ricin, resulting in difficulty breathing, internal bleeding, fever and death.</p>	<p><a href="#">LINK</a></p>	<p>\$1,195,183 in 2016 (<a href="#">R01AI098774</a>) \$7,619,163 (<a href="#">HHSN272201400021C</a>) \$519,830 in 2019 (<a href="#">R01AI125190</a>) \$9,384,181 in 2019 (<a href="#">OD011104</a>)  <b>TOTAL: \$18,718,357</b></p>
<p><b>5. Washington National Primate Center</b> Location: University of Washington</p>	<p>“Murry Lab Details Regeneration of Heart Muscle Using Stem Cells in WaNPRC Primates in new Study”<sup>15</sup></p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Monkeys were given heart attacks by inflating balloons in their arteries to block blood. They then underwent additional surgeries into measure heart activity and inject stem cells. Several primates died from complications before the project could be completed.</p>	<p><a href="#">LINK</a></p>	<p>\$871,276 in 2019 (<a href="#">R01HL128362</a>) \$641,198 in 2014 (<a href="#">R01HL084642</a>) \$2,911,463 in 2014 (<a href="#">P01HL094374</a>) \$13,667,730 in 2019 (<a href="#">P51OD010425</a>)  <b>TOTAL: \$18,091,667</b></p>
<p><b>6. Wisconsin National Primate Research Center</b> Location: University of Wisconsin-Madison</p>	<p>“Researchers Shed Light on How Ritalin Works”<sup>16</sup></p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Monkeys had metal posts screwed into their skulls to allow their heads to be immobilized for tests in which they are locked in restraint chairs. They were then given doses of the ADHD drug Ritalin and had their brains scanned.</p>	<p><a href="#">LINK</a></p>	<p>\$10,429,997 in 2019 (<a href="#">P51-OD011106</a>) \$1,878,556 in 2000 (<a href="#">RR15459</a>) \$3,650,000 in 2004 (<a href="#">RR020141</a>)  <b>TOTAL: \$ 15,958,553</b></p>
<p><b>7. Yerkes National Primate Research Center</b> Location: Emory University</p>	<p>“Tactic for Controlling Motor Symptoms of Advanced Parkinson's Disease”<sup>17</sup></p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Monkeys had areas of their brains destroyed with toxins to cause them to lose control of their limbs, mouths and other body parts. The primates also had recording chambers and head-restraining devices implanted into their skulls and electrodes inserted into their brains.</p>	<p><a href="#">LINK</a></p>	<p>NSF: \$795,000 as of 2019 (<a href="#">IOS1655365</a>)  NIH: \$635,472 in 2019 (<a href="#">NS045962</a>) \$47,979 in 2016 (<a href="#">NS073994</a>) \$367,661 in 2018 (<a href="#">NS036654</a>) \$341,250 in 2018 (<a href="#">NS065371</a>) \$11,538,101 in 2019 (<a href="#">P51OD011132</a>)  <b>TOTAL: \$ 13,725,463</b></p>

<sup>14</sup> <https://news.tulane.edu/pr/new-drug-shows-promise-against-deadly-ricin-toxin>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.wanprc.org/biobulletin/murry-lab-details-regeneration-of-heart-muscle-using-stem-cells-in-wanprc-primates-in-new-study/>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.primat.wisc.edu/?page\\_id=6291](https://www.primat.wisc.edu/?page_id=6291)

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.yerkes.emory.edu/about/news/neuropharmacology\\_neurologic\\_diseases/Papa\\_Cell\\_Reports\\_Controling\\_PD\\_Motor\\_Symptoms.html](http://www.yerkes.emory.edu/about/news/neuropharmacology_neurologic_diseases/Papa_Cell_Reports_Controling_PD_Motor_Symptoms.html)