



*Taxpayers shouldn't be forced to pay \$20 billion+ for **wasteful** government animal experiments.*

August 18, 2021

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

Via email: Deborah.Kearse@nih.gov

Dear Ms. Kearse,

On behalf of White Coat Waste Project (WCW) and its more than 3 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 \$104 million.

Press releases about wasteful taxpayer-funded primate experiments

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

1. *Infecting infant monkeys with Zika and separating them from their mothers*
 - Yerkes National Primate Research Center, Emory University
2. *Combining viruses to infect primates with Hepatitis B*
 - Southwest National Primate Research Center, Texas Biomedical Research Institute
3. *Injecting drugs into young monkeys and intentionally stressing them*
 - Wisconsin National Primate Research Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison
4. *Feeding primates unhealthy diets to test the health effects of fish oil*
 - California National Primate Research Center, University of California-Davis
5. *Infecting different species of primates with COVID*
 - Tulane National Primate Research Center, Tulane University
6. *Feeding unhealthy diets to female monkeys to study their fertility*
 - Oregon National Primate Research Center, Oregon Health and Science University
7. *Using macaque retinas to study how they perceive objects' movement*
 - Washington National Primate Research Center, University of Washington

The attached table includes details about the press releases and associated experiments. A review of NIH's federal research database indicates that the grants associated with the projects above

received a combined \$104 million in taxpayer funding in their most recent funding periods. These seven facilities together confine over 27,000 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.”¹

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. In October 2019, WCW sent you a letter about the NPRCs’ failure to comply with the Stevens Amendment, and a request to hold these institutions accountable. Since then, only one institution has minimally improved their spending disclosures, but still fails to conform to the Stevens Amendment. Virtually all the press releases published by the NPRCs are in still in violation of federal transparency law.

A report co-authored by WCW in 2017 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.

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.”^{2,3}

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

¹Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260), Division H, Title V, Sec. 505

² <https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2019/03/14/feds-confirms-wcw-report-on-animal-testing-transparency-violations-propose-reforms/>

³ <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-282>

Federal Funding” and the NIH issuing notices specifically informing grantees of this transparency mandate.^{4,5}

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. 760) 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.⁶

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 DL@whitecoatwaste.org or 202-643-8453.

Sincerely,



Daniel Lopez
Research Manager
White Coat Waste Project

cc: Meredith Stein, Acting Director, OMA
Jeff Hayden, Assistant Director, OMA
Dr. Michael Lauer, Deputy Director, NIH Office of Extramural Research
Senator Joni Ernst

Enclosure.

⁴ https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps/html5/section_4/4.2.1_acknowledgement_of_federal_funding.htm

⁵ <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-21-056.html>

⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/760>



Noncompliant National Primate Research Center Press Releases

TAXPAYER-FUNDED INSTITUTION	PRESS RELEASE TITLE	VIOLATES SPENDING DISCLOSURE LAW? ⁷	STUDY DESCRIPTION	PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTED IN PRESS RELEASE	ASSOCIATED GRANTS & COST TO TAXPAYERS ⁸
1. California National Primate Research Center Location: University of California-Davis	“Chicken Soup for the Soul, Fish Oil for the Heart” ⁹	Y	Primates were fed unhealthy diets, and had fish oil introduced to study its health effects.	LINK	\$536,440 in 2021 (U24DK092993) \$14,681,896 in 2021 (P51OD011107) \$75,091 in 2019 (R01HL121324) \$216,960 in 2008 (R21AT003645) \$536,440 in 2021 (U2CDK092993) \$3,683,244 in 2011 (UL1RR024146) \$334,950 in 2015 (R01DK095960) TOTAL: \$20,065,021
2. Oregon National Primate Research Center Location: Oregon Health and Science University	“Diets high in fat may negatively impact reproductive outcomes” ¹⁰	Y	10 young female macaques had their capacity to have viable pregnancies studied while swapping their diets from regular to high-fat, high sugar.	LINK	\$14,753,566 in 2021 (P51OD011092) \$1,652,887 in 2021 (P50HD071836) \$467,373 in 2021 (R01HD020869) TOTAL: \$16,873,826
3. Southwest National Primate Research Center Location: Texas Biomedical Research Institute	“New animal model identified to research hepatitis B virus” ¹¹	Y	Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is combined with another virus to infect otherwise naturally-immune squirrel monkeys with HBV.	LINK	\$8,877,641 in 2021 (P51OD011133) \$1,300,683 in 2021 (SP400D010938) TOTAL: \$10,178,324
4. Tulane National Primate Research Center Location: Tulane University	“Tulane identifies potential animal model for studying severe COVID-19 infections” ¹²	Y	Different species of primates were infected with COVID-19 and allowed to develop the illness to gauge which species develops the worst condition.	LINK	\$10,535,462 in 2021 (P51OD011104) \$987,497 in 2021 (R24AI120942) TOTAL: \$11,522,959
5. Washington National Primate Research Center Location: University of Washington	“Retina ‘hardwired’ to predict path of moving objects” ¹³	Y	Retinas from three different monkey species were harvested and studied to understand their reactions to moving objects.	LINK	\$12,859,589 in 2021 (OD010425) \$424,142 in 2021 (R01EY027323) \$530,985 in 2021 (R01EY029247) \$377,087 in 2021 (R01EY028542) \$799,520 in 2020 (P30EY001730) TOTAL: \$14,991,323
6. Wisconsin National Primate Research Center Location: University of Wisconsin-Madison	“Designer alterations to brain cells reduce anxious behavior in monkeys, hold promise for new treatments” ¹⁴	Y	Monkeys had drugs injected to their brains and were put in stressful situations to see how their behaviors and brain activity changed.	LINK	\$923,340 in 2021 (MH046729) \$1,652,183 in 2015 (HD003352) \$9,875,419 in 2021 (P51OD011106) \$1,878,556 in 2000 (RR015459) \$3,650,000 in 2004 (RR020141) TOTAL: \$17,979,498
7. Yerkes National Primate Research Center Location: Emory University	“Yerkes Researchers Find Zika Infection Soon After Birth Leads to Long-Term Brain and Behavior Problems” ¹⁵	Y	5-week-old monkeys were separated from their mothers and infected with Zika to develop various behavioral, motor, and cognitive symptoms.	LINK	\$12,778,689 in 2021 (P51OD011132)

⁷ 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)

⁸ 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.

⁹ <https://cnprc.ucdavis.edu/chicken-soup-for-the-soul-fish-oil-for-the-heart/>

¹⁰ <https://news.ohsu.edu/2021/02/24/diets-high-in-fat-may-negatively-impact-reproductive-outcomes>

¹¹ <https://www.txbiomed.org/news-press/news/new-animal-model-identified-to-research-hepatitis-b-virus/>

¹² <https://tnprc.tulane.edu/news/1648879/Tulane%20identifies%20potential%20animal%20model%20for%20studying%20severe%20COVID-19%20infections>

¹³ <https://newsroom.uw.edu/news/retina-hardwired-predict-path-moving-objects>

¹⁴ <https://news.wisc.edu/designer-alterations-to-brain-cells-reduce-anxious-behavior-in-monkeys-hold-promise-for-new-treatments/>

¹⁵ http://www.yerkes.emory.edu/about/news/microbiology_immunology/Chahroudi_Zika_Soon_After_Birth_Nature_Comm.html