

June 25, 2009

The Honorable Henry Waxman
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Request for co-sponsorship of Towns-Reichert Great Ape Protection Act (H.R. 1326)

Dear Representative Waxman:

I'm writing to ask you to support a bill that could immediately reduce the amount of suffering in the world and could also improve human medicine. The Towns-Reichert Great Ape Protection Act (H.R. 1326), recently introduced in the House Subcommittee on Health, would phase out invasive research on chimpanzees and release all federally owned chimpanzees to sanctuaries.

On TV, I play a forensic anthropologist who solves crimes by reading clues in victims' bones. In real life, I'm an animal protection advocate, and I don't need any more evidence to know that the way we treat chimpanzees is unacceptable. Chimpanzees used in experiments suffer immensely. It can be easy to forget these animals, who are locked away and out of sight. But for them, every single day is another day in harsh conditions, often without adequate enrichment and without companions.

Many of these intelligent, emotionally sophisticated creatures have spent 40 years or more in cramped cages about the size of a kitchen table. Insightful, patient questions with great apes trained to communicate using computers and American Sign Language reveal that they are concerned about harm from humans and want to explore and experience the beauty of nature. Most of all, they want to be with their family and friends. The Great Ape Protection Act is the best chance we have to ease their pain and suffering.

This legislation would allow about 500 chimpanzees to live their remaining years in sanctuaries. They could form bonds with other chimpanzees, bask in the sunlight, and feel the grass and the earth. That's the least we can do for chimpanzees, our species' closest living relatives. Chimpanzees and humans have a lot in common, but evidence has shown that chimpanzees have failed as models for human disease. This realization, along with ethical concerns, has led to a steep decline in experiments on chimpanzees. The United States is the only country still using chimpanzees in large-scale research. It's time to join the rest of the world and give these animals the peace they deserve.

I hope you will co-sponsor the Great Ape Protection Act. This legislation may be the only hope for chimpanzees waking up each day in barren laboratory cages. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Emily Deschanel

