



March 6, 2025

DOGE HHS

Via direct message on X: [https://x.com/DOGE\\_HHS](https://x.com/DOGE_HHS)

**Subject: Waste, fraud, and abuse at the National Primate Research Centers**

Dear DOGE HHS:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members, including more than 5 million in the United States—to urge you to take immediate action against the egregious waste, fraud, and abuse occurring at the seven federally-funded National Primate Research Centers. These taxpayer-funded facilities, bankrolled by billions through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), have become nothing more than cruel, outdated, and scientifically bankrupt institutions. They breed suffering, are a nidus for zoonotic disease transmission, and have categorically failed to meaningfully advance human health in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is time to shut down the cash flow—millions in NIH grants each year, including outrageous indirect costs as high as 83%, must be squashed.

### **Decades of wasted taxpayer money**

The National Primate Research Centers (NPRCs) developed out of a program that Congress created in the 1960s ostensibly to support the development of facilities that would import and breed primates for experimentation and attempt to develop primate “models” for human disease. In 2015, systemic neglect and mistreatment of monkeys at the New England Primate Research Center led Harvard University to shut it down. Yet, seven NPRCs remain national primate research centers—California NPRC at the University of California–Davis; Oregon NPRC at Oregon Health & Science University; Southwest NPRC at Texas Biomedical Research Institute; Tulane NPRC at Tulane University; Washington NPRC at the University of Washington; Wisconsin NPRC at the University of Wisconsin–Madison; and Emory NPRC at Emory University.

During the Biden administration alone, the base “P51” NIH grants have funneled more than \$355 *million* into these facilities—just to prop up their infrastructure—and doesn't include millions more given for the experiments during the same period. As recently reported by the [Daily Caller](#), NIH engaged in secretive email discussions acknowledging that taxpayer-funded experiments on baby monkeys were cruel and scientifically useless—then kept funding them anyway. This revelation exposes a disturbing pattern of deception, where NIH officials acted “to save face despite knowing they had little scientific value.” **Since their inception, the NPRCs have drained taxpayers of billions, all while failing to deliver meaningful scientific breakthroughs. This is not just waste—it's an outright scandal.**

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As you know, on February 7, the NIH announced it was lowering the maximum indirect cost rate to 15%. Several states, including those hosting NPRCs, quickly filed a lawsuit in response, unsurprising given that NPRCs have some of the highest indirect costs among NIH-funded projects. The lawsuit itself underscores just how extreme these costs are, acknowledging that the **Washington NPRC has a staggering 83.1% negotiated indirect cost rate**, the highest rate cited in the lawsuit and far higher than what is typical for other research areas. This eye-popping figure exemplifies the rampant financial waste that has plagued the NPRCs for decades.

### **Egregious Violations and Abuse**

Cruelty, negligence, and incompetence are common at NPRCs. Federal inspectors have documented monkeys scalded to death after their cages were run through a high-temperature mechanical cage washer while they were still trapped inside. The USDA has issued dozens of violations of the Animal Welfare Act against the NPRCs. The University of Washington was recently hit with a critical violation after NIH-funded experimenter Fritzie Arce-McShane willfully and repeatedly violated protocol, deceived staff, and lethally irradiated a monkey. The monkey's injuries were so severe he couldn't be saved.

### **Failed directors and rogue experimenters**

Directors of the NPRCs have consistently failed to lead with sound science or ethics. In 2023, the Southwest NPRC director, Deepak Kaushal, was [demoted](#) after the U.S. Office of Research Integrity [found](#) that he engaged in research misconduct with experiments funded by numerous taxpayer-funded grants and faked data in grant applications and a published paper.

In 2024, University of Washington NPRC director Michele Basso was ousted after PETA delivered a [letter](#) urging her removal for her long history of **ignoring veterinary staff, botching surgeries, and drilling into monkeys' skulls with reckless disregard at institutions across the country**. Though removed as director, the university kept her active as an experimenter at the NPRC, with nearly \$1.5 million in NIH funding. Even the university's notoriously weak Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) was forced to acknowledge her misconduct after she subjected an elderly monkey to repeated anesthetized procedures **without prior approval**—a clear protocol violation. And yet, instead of real consequences, Basso got nothing but a slap on the wrist: a meaningless letter of reprimand. This is exactly the kind of taxpayer-funded abuse and oversight failure that DOGE must eliminate.

### **Zoonotic disease risk**

Monkeys in laboratories—whether or not they are infected with experimental diseases—can shed dangerous bacteria, viruses, mycobacteria, and parasites that pose a serious risk to humans.

The University of Washington primate breeding facility is wallowing in pathogens that are killing the monkeys. The UW Safety Committee has acknowledged that workers in Arizona and Seattle are being exposed to and infected with these same bacteria and viruses. Not only has UW failed for years to clean up the facilities and infected monkeys who are harboring pathogens that Washington and Arizona state departments of health list as notifiable diseases, but now whistleblowers tell PETA that workers are not being adequately protected from exposures or provided with treatment upon falling ill.

### **Absurd Experiments**

If you call it “science,” you can get millions of dollars from NIH to torture monkeys for just about anything. Despite their own [findings](#) that SARS-CoV-2 doesn't behave in monkeys as it does in

humans, experimenters at the NPRCs are still riding the COVID-19 wave and consuming countless monkeys for this supposed research like Dhiraj Kumar Singh's [grant](#) that has swallowed up nearly \$4 million taxpayer dollars since 2022. Other experiments are even more meaningless, like an experimenter at Oregon NPRC who gave male monkeys daily cannabis edibles and then, every two months, ejaculated them using an electric probe. Wisconsin NPRC male monkeys were used in a transgender [study](#) to try to model feminizing hormone therapy. The motivation for all this "research" is to keep publishing papers and keep the money flowing.

### **Case in Point: Decades of Research for HIV Vaccine Utter Failure**

In the late 1970s, Congress debated defunding what was then called the Regional Primate Research Centers. Concerns included budget constraints, ethical issues, evolving scientific priorities, and the failure of the centers to deliver truly significant, impactful treatments for humans. Lawmakers questioned the cost-effectiveness of primate research, especially as alternative methods like cell cultures gained traction. Congress relented when the NPRCs argued that, using primates, they would quickly develop a vaccine to combat HIV/AIDS. What the NPRCs failed to mention was that they couldn't effectively infect nonhuman primates with HIV. Instead, experimenters infected monkeys with a simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) or a chimeric simian-human immunodeficiency virus (SHIV) to try to mimic HIV in humans. Monkeys infected with SIV/SHIV are lousy models for humans infected with HIV. Dozens and dozens of vaccines have been tested in monkeys, but not one of them has been shown in clinical trials to give humans sufficient protection from HIV. Consider that one of the HIV vaccines that was touted as safe and effective in monkeys [increased the risks that vaccinated humans would get infected with HIV](#). An experimenter at WaNPRC admitted twenty years ago that "because of the complexity and [limitations of the nonhuman primate models, it remains difficult to extrapolate data](#) from these models to inform the development of HIV vaccines." Yet, HIV/AIDS-related diseases remain a key unit at the NPRCs and are the focus of the recently appointed director of WaNPRC, Deborah Fuller.

### **Request: Cut NIH funding to the National Primate Research Centers**

As long as the federal gravy train continues, universities are disincentivized to cut their experiments, which are bringing in the money, no matter how useless or cruel the experiments may be. We urge that you start ending the waste and abuse funded by our tax dollars by cutting NIH funding to the NPRCs, starting with the base "P51" grants, and direct that funding instead to human-relevant, non-animal, cheaper research methods to bring us the solutions that we desperately need. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kathy Guillermo  
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