



# The American Physiological Society

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*Integrating  
the Life Sciences  
from Molecule to  
Organism*

September 8, 2006

The Honorable Arlen Specter, Chairman  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the American Physiological Society (APS), I urge you to cosponsor the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (S. 1926). The APS is a not-for profit professional society dedicated to advancing scientific research into processes that sustain life. Physiologists study function in the body at the level of the molecule and cell, organ system, and in the whole organism. The APS was founded in 1887 and today has nearly 11,000 member scientists working in all 50 states in colleges and universities, medical schools, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, and government agencies.

S. 1926 is needed to protect medical researchers against harassment and violence perpetrated in the name of animal rights. It would make it a federal crime to damage or disrupt animal enterprises such as research facilities through the use of force, violence, or threats. It would apply not only to research facilities themselves but also to those who do business with them. In addition, S. 1926 would make it a federal crime to threaten and harass individuals on the basis of their ties to organizations that conduct research. The bill is not intended to curb lawful protests or First Amendment-protected speech. Rather, it is intended to provide federal law enforcement with the tools needed to meet the challenge of animal rights extremists.

Under the Animal Enterprise Protection Act of 1992 (PL 102-346), it is a federal crime to cause physical disruption or property damage to animal enterprises. However, some extremists have sought to avoid federal jurisdiction by focusing on secondary or tertiary targets such as customers, suppliers, and employees rather than animal facilities themselves. One particularly troubling tactic is the use of orchestrated campaigns of personal harassment, threats, and vandalism against individuals and their families. Through such campaigns, extremists have succeeded in intimidating people while largely evading attention from law enforcement.

Orchestrated harassment is a tactic devised in the U.K. by animal rights extremists trying to shut down Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS), a company that does pre-market safety testing of medications. HLS withstood that challenge in the U.K., and now its facilities, customers, and suppliers in the U.S. and other countries are being similarly targeted. The attacks range from disrupting business operations to malicious personal harassment of individuals. Business disruptions have included overloading telephone lines, tying up fax machines by sending "black faxes," and bombarding Internet servers with junk email.

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Personal harassment has included posting personal information about employees of HLS, its suppliers, and customers on websites with lists of suggestions how to intimidate them. Such postings have led to noisy demonstrations at employees' homes, threatening phone calls, scurrilous accusations, and vandalism. The stated goal of these actions is to pressure businesses and individuals to sever their ties with HLS.

William Trundley, who is GlaxoSmithKline's Vice President for Global Corporate Security and Investigations, highlighted this problem at a May 23, 2006 hearing of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. Trundley testified that as a result of GSK's connection to HLS, the company's U.S. offices, employees, and business associates had been subjected to more than 150 instances of harassment, vandalism, slander, theft, and threats of bodily harm during the preceding 21 months. Moreover, none of those cases had been successfully prosecuted. The incidents in question included:

- Public accusations that a GSK executive was a pedophile.
- Death threats screamed at an employee in the GSK parking lot.
- Flyers containing confidential information about divorce proceedings and alcohol treatment distributed at the school of a GSK employee's child.

Violence, intimidation, and harassment do more than cause economic harm. They also hinder medical progress by driving researchers out of their profession. In August 2006, a UCLA neurobiologist ended his research into how primates process visual information because he feared for his family's safety. The researcher had been subjected to repeated episodes of harassment and threats. However, an incident that took place in June, 2006, changed everything. Extremists left an explosive device at a house where they believed another UCLA primate researcher was living. The device did not explode, but if it had, it could have destroyed the house. The neurobiologist was not willing to subject his wife and young children to that kind of danger so he notified several extremist groups that he was halting his research program and asked them to leave his family alone. Jerry Vlasak, a spokesman for the North American Animal Liberation Press Office, subsequently told the *Los Angeles Times* that this shows that "the use of force or the threat of forces is an effective means" to end research with animals.

Congress must pass S. 1926 so that federal law enforcement can take effective action against these extremists. This legislation will not limit First Amendment rights because intimidation, threats, and harassment are not protected speech. If the anti-research forces get their way, the repercussions will be felt most severely by those who look to medical research to relieve their suffering. I urge you to cosponsor the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act to give federal law enforcement the tools needed to ensure that life-saving medical research is not derailed by extremism.

Sincerely,

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Dale J. Benos, Ph.D.  
President