

University of California Q&A
AB 2296 (Mullin) as amended August 21, 2008
The Researcher Protection Act of 2008

The University of California is sponsoring and strongly supports AB 2296, Assemblymember Gene Mullin's bill that would provide law enforcement with additional tools to protect academic researchers and their families from being violently attacked and threatened by animal rights extremists.

What would this bill do?

California currently lacks sufficient legal deterrents and protections needed to end the escalating campaign of violence and intimidation by anti-research extremists. AB 2296 would enhance the ability of state law enforcement and prosecutors to protect academic researchers and their families who are victims of threatening and destructive tactics employed by extremists, without jeopardizing legitimate and lawful expressions of free speech. Specifically the bill would:

- Provide protection to academic researchers by creating a new misdemeanor crime for publishing information about a researcher or their immediate family with intent that another person will use the information to imminently commit a crime involving violence or threat of violence against an academic researcher or their immediate family.
- Provide that entry onto the residential real property of an academic researcher for the purpose of chilling, preventing the exercise of, or interfering with the researcher's academic freedom is a trespass, also a criminal misdemeanor violation.

Why is the bill needed?

Increasingly University of California faculty who conduct research involving laboratory animals have found themselves subject to frightening and prolonged campaigns of intimidation by extreme animal rights activists. While traditional targets have included research and biomedical laboratories, extremists are now taking direct action against researchers and other staff, as well as their families, at their homes. These aggressive and violent acts put the researchers, their families, and their neighbors in grave danger.

- Recent incidents include firebombings at the homes of two UC Santa Cruz faculty members. In one case, a firebomb ignited the front door of a faculty member's home, filling the house with smoke. The faculty member, his wife and two children escaped on a ladder from a second-story window of the home.
- On three occasions since June 2006, firebombs have also been left near the homes of UCLA faculty who conduct or oversee research involving animals. In one incident, the firebomb was mistakenly left at the front door of a neighbor's home.
- Wearing masks to conceal their identities, animal rights extremists have appeared at researchers' homes in the middle of the night, used megaphones to shout threats and obscenities, and vandalized property.
- In furtherance of their campaign of terror, extremists use websites and flyers to publish the personal information, home addresses and photographs of researchers and their families along with incitements of violence. Those researchers whose information is published by extremists are frequently the victims of acts of violence and harassment.