



September 25, 2017

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and
Related Agencies
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and
Related Agencies
722 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charlie Dent
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and
Related Agencies
HVC-227
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and
Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Schatz, Chairman Dent, and Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz:

On behalf of the American Brain Coalition (ABC), I am writing to express our opposition to H.Amdt. 226 to H.R.3219 Make America Secure Appropriations Act of 2018, which was passed by the House and sent to the Senate on July 31, 2017. The PUPPERS Act (H.R. 3197) includes similar language to H.Amdt. 226 and the ABC stands with others in opposition to this legislation as well.

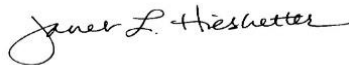
The ABC is a non-profit organization comprised of many of the leading patient advocacy and voluntary health organizations, as well as professional neurological, psychological, and psychiatric associations representing researchers and healthcare providers in the United States. We are proud to have the support of a small number of publicly-traded corporations that actively engage in brain-related research. Together, we seek to advance the understanding of brain functions and reduce the burden of brain disorders through public advocacy with the Congress, the administration, and the general public. Our members are committed to working toward treatments and cures for the up to 50 million Americans afflicted with disorders of the brain and nervous system.

The ABC supports the use of animals in research since this research has played a critical role in nearly every major medical advance of the last century. From the development of life saving medications, to better diagnosis and prevention techniques, the knowledge generated through this research is essential to both human and animal health. Research on animals has not only saved lives and money but also improved health and reduced suffering in both humans and animals. In order to treat and cure disorders of the brain, continued research on the complex functions of the living nervous system is necessary.

VA researchers only use dogs in research when the dog model is clearly the most suitable for the scientific study. Currently, dogs are estimated to comprise less than 0.05% of all animals in VA research. H.Amdt. 226 bars the VA Medical and Prosthetics Research program from conducting research using dogs and stipulates that VA funding cannot be used “to purchase, breed, transport, house, feed, maintain, dispose of, or experiment on dogs” for certain categories of research. This amendment unnecessarily conflicts the processes developed in accordance with laws, regulations, and institutional policies that ensure the humane treatment and safety of animals utilized in scientifically meritorious research projects. Further, this amendment will unnecessarily impede the collection of data in the development of new therapies to treat disease. Researchers both embrace and follow strict guidelines relating to minimum, set standards for handling, housing, watering, feeding, sheltering and ventilation of experimental animals. Before embarking on any project that involves animals, researchers carefully evaluate whether the research is justified based on the science. Therefore, the ABC urges you to support veterans and science by deleting H.Amdt. 226 from the final version of the VA’s FY 2018 appropriations bill so the agency can continue to fund vital research.

We hope that you will consider the ABC as a resource. If we can ever be helpful, please contact Katie Sale, ABC’s Executive Director, at (763) 557-2913 or at ksale@americanbraincoalition.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet L. Hieshetter".

Janet Hieshetter
Chair
American Brain Coalition