



**FOVA Executive
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August 25, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Friends of VA Health Care and Medical Research coalition — better known as FOVA — we want to express our strong concerns with a provision in the Defense, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, Legislative Branch, and Energy and Water Development National Security Appropriations Act, 2018 that bars the VA Medical and Prosthetics Research program from conducting research using dogs. We believe implementation of this provision impedes progress on medical research.

More than 25 years ago, FOVA was founded to help ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality healthcare. Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing more than 80 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran service organizations.

Animal models play an essential role in advancing our understanding of human health and disease. Animal models are used to reveal and describe basic cell and tissue function, discover disease processes, understand disease progression and test interventions to treat disease. Specifically, dog studies have advanced our understanding of immunodeficiency, narcolepsy, metabolic disease, cancer, autoimmune function, vision and epilepsy. In short, animal models, including dogs, have helped advance science which has helped save human and animal lives.

FOVA strongly supports efforts to reduce unnecessary use of animals in all scientific research. We further support ethical treatment of all animals, including dogs, where use of animals in research is appropriate. Currently, over 99% of all VA-sponsored animal studies are conducted on mice or rats. The percentage is consistent with lab animal use patterns across all U.S. research institutions. VA researchers only use dogs in research when the dog model is clearly the most suitable for the scientific study. There are currently 85 dogs used in VA-sponsored studies — approximately 0.05% of VA lab animal use.

While we understand and appreciate the efforts to reduce use of dogs in animal research, we believe the policy included in the appropriations bill will impede scientific research and unnecessarily delay research advances for our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,

The FOVA Executive Committee

FY 2017 FOVA Endorsers

AcademyHealth
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Neuromuscular and Electrodiagnostic Medicine
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Pain Medicine
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Clinical Pharmacology
American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine
American Federation for Medical Research
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Heart Association
American Liver Foundation
American Lung Association
American Military Retirees Association
American Optometric Association
American Pain Society
American Physiological Society
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Bone and Mineral Research
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society of Nephrology
American Thoracic Society
Arthritis Foundation
Association for Clinical and Translational Science
Association of Academic Physiatrists
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists
Catholic War Veterans of the U.S.A., Inc.

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Coalition for Clinical and Translational Science
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America
Digestive Disease National Coalition
Disabled American Veterans
Disabled Sports USA
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
Endocrine Society
FAIR Foundation
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders
Interstitial Cystitis Association
Men's Health Network
Military Officers Association of America
National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alopecia Areata Foundation
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics
National Association for Uniformed Services
National Association of VA Dermatologists
National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
NephCure Kidney International
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Paralyzed Veterans of America Spinal Cord Research Foundation
Parkinson's Action Network
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Research Society on Alcoholism
Scleroderma Foundation
Sleep Research Society
Society for Investigative Dermatology
Society for Women's Health Research
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Military Widows
The Clinical Research Forum
The Marfan Foundation
US Hereditary Angioedema Association
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US