

# The American Legion



OFFICE OF THE  
NATIONAL COMMANDER

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September 1, 2017

Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran:

The American Legion has reviewed the amendment to the Defense, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, Legislative Branch, and Energy and Water Development National Security Appropriations Act, 2018 (the homeland security "minibus") that was passed by the House of Representatives and is being considered for inclusion in the Senate. A virtually identical standalone bill, the "Preventing Unkind and Painful Procedures and Experiments on Respected Species (PUPPERS) Act of 2017", H.R. 3197, has been referred to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. We have also reviewed the criticisms offered by White Coat Waste Project.

After reviewing the Department of Veterans Affairs' research procedures regarding live animal research, we find the VA's practices to be within recommended federal and ethical standards as established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institutes of Health. Based on this information, The American Legion opposes the amendment to the minibuss, and H.R. 3197, and encourages VA to continue research vital to advancing the medical wellbeing of our nation's veterans.

Animal research has contributed to medical advancements in typhus, yellow fever, and polio, and has aided in the discovery and deployment of vaccines against Zika, Ebola, and malaria, and management of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and HIV/AIDS. The research being conducted by VA includes development of improved diagnosis and treatment to preserve and improve life in patients with heart disease, as well as research to prevent deadly lung infections in people with spinal cord injuries, to develop improved systems for sensing glucose levels and delivering appropriate doses of insulin in people with diabetes, and to assist with our understanding and treatment of PTSD and TBI.

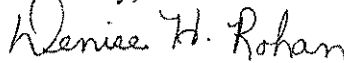
Stopping VA research that can only be done with dogs will mean accepting that the care we offer our veterans must be limited to what we can do now in those areas. VA's efforts to develop some promising ways to restore the ability to cough to individuals with spinal cord injuries or other problems with respiratory control will stop, leaving people vulnerable to potentially lethal respiratory infections that could otherwise be avoided. VA will not be able to pursue some ways to reduce the damage that heart attacks cause to heart muscle. VA's efforts to improve the control of blood glucose levels in individuals with diabetes will be limited, even though current studies show that improved management of blood

glucose can dramatically reduce the risks of eye damage, kidney failure, skin disease, nerve damage, and amputations. VA will have to abandon some efforts to make it possible for doctors to evaluate more accurately and manage more effectively how blood vessels function, which will limit how well strokes can be prevented and how successfully organs can be transplanted.

There are many pet owners and animal lovers in The American Legion. Sometimes animal research is needed for the greater good of protecting human life. The American Legion believes VA researchers take every precaution possible to ensure that these animals are treated as humanely as possible. We strongly support the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of 2006 and oppose all illegal testing being performed on animals. The American Legion recognizes the irreplaceable value this research provides for our veterans and appreciate the sacrifice these animals make in the name of science that humans and service animals, as well as duty K-9s, benefit greatly from. Every vaccine developed for these animals was developed with the help of animals that have served in research.

We support VA's statutory mission in medical research and place a great deal of trust in the scientists and physicians at VA, to continue to exercise prudence and high moral ethics when weighing the value of using animals in their research while considering all other alternatives.

Sincerely,

  
DENISE H. ROHAN  
National Commander

Copy to:

House Committee on Appropriations  
Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman  
Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Honorable Phil Roe, Chairman  
Honorable Tim Walz, Ranking Member