

September 13, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

Dear Senators Cochran and Leahy:

The undersigned veterans service organizations write to oppose any legislative attempts to restrict the Department of Veterans Affairs animal research programs.

We believe the Department's research procedures are well within recommended federal and ethical standards, as recommended by both the US Department of Agriculture and the National Institutes of Health. Further, we strongly argue that live animal research is vital to the medical wellbeing of our country's veterans.

Animal research is vital to reducing the risks lung infections for veterans with spinal cord injuries, and to improving treatments for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury. Curbing or ending this research will condemn wounded and injured veterans to potentially lethal respiratory infections, increased harm from heart attacks, less ability to adequately manage diabetes side effects (such as eye damage, kidney failure, and amputations), and increased disability from strokes, and failed organ transplantation.

We understand the emotional power of live animal testing, especially on dogs. We believe, however, that VA researchers take every precaution to ensure the most humane treatment possible for these animals, and to make the most balanced medical and ethical decisions on the nature and scope of their animal testing.

Given that, we believe any legislative attempts to curtail this research, such as the Preventing Unkind and Painful Procedures and Experiments on Respected Species (PUPPERS) Act of 2017, or the near identical version contained in the House-passed Minibus Appropriations Act, are ill-advised and hazardous for our veterans. We strongly request the Senate Appropriations Committee reject any similar legislative proposals, and to not recede to the House version in conference.

If you have any questions, Bob Carey (202-779-1598, Bob.Carey@Empire-Capitol.com) of Square Deal for Veterans can refer you to the appropriate organization contact.

Very Respectfully,

Association of the US Navy
National Defense Committee
Square Deal for Veterans
Vietnam Veterans of America

Copy: Senate Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee Chair,
Jerry Moran
Senate Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee
Ranking Member Brian Schatz
House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen
House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Nita Lowey
Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson
Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Ranking Member Jon Tester
House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Phil Roe, M.D.
House Veterans Affairs Committee Ranking Member Tim Walz