



**FOVA Executive  
Committee**

**Adrian Atizado**

Disabled American  
Veterans  
202-314-5226  
[aatizado@dav.org](mailto:aatizado@dav.org)

**Sarah Dean**

Paralyzed Veterans of  
America  
202-416-7712  
[sarahd@pva.org](mailto:sarahd@pva.org)

**Gary Ewart**

American Thoracic  
Society  
202-296-9770  
[gewart@thoracic.org](mailto:gewart@thoracic.org)

**Heather Kelly, Ph.D.**

American Psychological  
Association  
202-336-5932  
[hkelly@apa.org](mailto:hkelly@apa.org)

**Matthew Shick**

Association of American  
Medical Colleges  
202-862-6116  
[mshick@aamc.org](mailto:mshick@aamc.org)

**Rick Starrs**

National Association of  
Veterans' Research and  
Education Foundations  
301-656-5005  
[rstarrs@navref.org](mailto:rstarrs@navref.org)

**Jennifer Zeitzer**

Federation of American  
Societies for  
Experimental Biology  
301-634-7128  
[jzeitzer@faseb.org](mailto:jzeitzer@faseb.org)

November xx, 2017

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

The Honorable Charlie Dent  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and,  
Related Agencies Subcommittee  
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

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman-Schultz  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and  
Related Agencies Subcommittee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen and Dent and Ranking Members Lowey and Wasserman-Schultz:

On behalf of the Friends of the VA Medical Center and Health Research (FOVA), we respectfully urge you to adopt the \$722 million for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Program that was included in the amended fiscal year 2018 (FY) Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill (S 1557) approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 13, 2017.

FOVA is a diverse coalition representing national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veterans service organizations. FOVA was founded almost 25 years ago, to ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality healthcare. We believe an important connection exists among VA health care, VA's academic affiliated, and the VA Research and Development programs. This relationship supports advanced practice and effective, safe care for veterans, helps veterans recover from war, disease and illness, and pays even more dividends to the nation, including promoting better health for all.

The \$722 million for the Medical and Prosthetic Program for FY 2018 approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee will provide critically needed funds to support current research on chronic conditions of aging veterans. In addition, this funding level will advance emerging research on conditions prevalent among younger Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn veterans.

The VA Research program also needs additional funds to advance genomic medicine through the Million Veteran Program (MVP), an effort that seeks to collect genetic samples and general health information from 1 million veterans over the next five years. When completed, the MVP will constitute one of the largest genetic repositories in existence, offering tremendous potential to study the health of veterans. To date, more than 550,000 veterans have enrolled in MVP. Although the VA is uniquely positioned to transform this field of research and support innovative projects like MVP, this program should not impede other critical VA research priorities.

Despite numerous successes in research and innovation, since FY 2010 appropriated funding for VA research and development has lagged behind biomedical research inflation, resulting in stagnant VA purchasing power. As estimated by the Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis and the National Institutes of Health, to maintain VA research at current service levels, the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research appropriation would require at least a 2.8 percent increase over the FY 2017 level.

The funding level recommended by the Senate achieves and exceeds the 2.8 percent target and would allow the VA to fund additional meritorious research proposals that are integral to improving care for the nation's veterans. Areas of research that remain critically underfunded and could benefit from additional resources include:

- post deployment mental health concerns such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, and suicide
- the gender-specific health care needs of the growing population of women veterans
- engineering and technology to improve the lives of veterans with prosthetic systems that replace lost limbs or activate paralyzed nerves, muscles, and limbs
- studies dedicated to understanding chronic multi-symptom illnesses among Gulf War veterans and the long-term health effect of potentially hazardous substances to which they may have been exposed
- innovative health services strategies, such as tele-health and self-directed care, relatively new concepts that lead to accessible, high-quality, cost-effective care for all veterans as VA works to address chronic patient backlogs and reduce waiting times

FOVA also urges you to reject a provision that was included in the House Defense, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, Legislative Branch, and Energy and Water Development National Security Appropriations Act of 2018 that bars the VA Medical and Prosthetics Research program from conducting research using dogs. Animal models are used to reveal basic cell and tissue function, discover disease processes, understand disease progression and test interventions to treat disease. Dog studies have led to advances in immunodeficiency, narcolepsy, metabolic disease, cancer, autoimmune function, vision and epilepsy. Animal models, including dogs, have helped save human and animal lives. We believe implementation of this provision will impede progress on medical research and unnecessarily delay advances for our nation's veterans.

Thank you for your continued support of the VA research program. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure that VA has the resources necessary to improve the lives of veterans through innovations in basic, translational, clinical, health services, and rehabilitation research.

Sincerely,

The FOVA Executive Committee

cc: The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Jerry Moran, Chairman Senate Mil-Con/VA Subcommittee  
The Honorable Brian Schatz, Ranking Member, Senate Mil-Con/VA Subcommittee  
The Honorable Richard Durbin

## 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