

November 17, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen and Cochran:

We, the undersigned organizations, join the 15 other veteran, military, veterinary, scientific, and medical organizations in opposition to H.R. 3197, the “PUPPERS” Act, and a similar amendment offered by Rep. Dave Brat (R-VA) to the Defense, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, Legislative Branch, and Energy and Water Development National Security Appropriations Act, 2018.

We echo statements expressed by the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS), American Brain Coalition (ABC), American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM), The American Legion, American Physiological Society (APS), American Psychological Association (APA), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Association of the U.S. Navy (AUSN), Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), Friends of VA (FOVA), Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), National Defense Committee, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Square Deal for Veterans, and the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). Animal models, including canines, remain vital to scientific discovery to better understand diseases and disorders, and to develop treatments and countermeasures to improve human and animal life. We support efforts to reduce animal use when scientifically appropriate and further support ethical treatment of all animals, including dogs. Dogs represent less than one percent of all animals in biomedical research, but their role is important based on similarities in physiology. At the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), 0.05% of research animals are dogs, and the VA continues to decrease their use of dogs where feasible. Since 1995, studies with canines have decreased by 90% at the VA.

Canines have been and continue to be extremely important to scientific discovery. The cardiac pacemaker, the first liver transplant, nicotine patch, and the discovery of insulin were all developed through research with dogs. Canines are currently playing a vital role in the moonshot to end cancer, aging and Alzheimer’s, heart disease, diabetes, and most recently the first FDA-approved artificial pancreas was brought to fruition because of work at the VA. Additionally, 22 of the 25 most prescribed medications were brought to patients’ bedsides thanks to research with canines.

Veterinary science has also made significant strides, thanks to significant contributions by research canines. Vaccinations against infectious diseases, some devastating, such as canine distemper, parvovirus, rabies, coronavirus, leptospirosis, Lyme disease, measles, and hepatitis all exist due to research with canines. Prevention and treatment of common, but sometimes serious, health issues like heartworm and a variety of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks, mites and mange have been brought to fruition, again, through research with dogs.

H.R. 3197 and a similar amendment to the homeland security “minibus” would effectively end funding for important studies at the VA involving canines.

We embrace efforts by scientists to reduce the number of animals needed in research and to replace animals when possible, but these misdirected efforts could lead to stymied medical advancement for our nation’s veterans.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to submit our concerns.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Neurology (AAN)
American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS)
American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP)
American Neurological Association (ANA)
American Society of Laboratory Animal Practitioners (ASLAP)
American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET)
American Thoracic Society (ATS)
Americans for Medical Progress (AMP)
Associated Medical Schools of New York (AMSNY)
Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO)
Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
Association of American Universities (AAU)
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)
Baylor College of Medicine
California Biomedical Research Association (CBRA)
Coalition for the Life Sciences
The College on Problems of Drug Dependence, Inc.
Comparative Biosciences, Inc.
Council On Governmental Relations (COGR)
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)
Massachusetts Society for Medical Research (MSMR)
Michigan Society for Medical Research (MISMR)
National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA)
National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR)
National Association of Veterans’ Research & Education Foundations (NAVREF)
New Jersey Association for Biomedical Research (NJABR)
North Carolina Association for Biomedical Research (NCABR)
Northwest Association for Biomedical Research (NWABR)
Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU)
Pennsylvania Society for Biomedical Research (PSBR)
RxGen
SNBL USA, Ltd.
Society for Neuroscience (SfN)
Society for the Study of Reproduction (SSR)
States United for Biomedical Research (SUBR)
Texas Society for Biomedical Research (TSBR)

University of California, Los Angeles
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Washington University in St. Louis

CC:

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Phil Roe, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable Tim Walz, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Johnny Isakson, Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable John Tester, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs