



FOVA Executive Committee

Adrian Atizado

Disabled American Veterans

aatizado@dav.org

Sarah Dean

Paralyzed Veterans of America

sarahd@pva.org

Gary Ewart

American Thoracic Society

gewart@thoracic.org

Emily Holubowich

AcademyHealth

eholubowich@dc-crd.com

Kayda Keleher

Veterans of Foreign Wars

kkeleher@vfw.org

Heather Kelly, Ph.D.

American Psychological Association

hkelly@apa.org

Matthew Shick

Association of American Medical Colleges

mshick@aamc.org

Rick Starrs

National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations

rstars@navref.org

Jennifer Zeitzer

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

jzeitzer@faseb.org

July 11, 2018

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA), we respectfully urge you to adopt the Senate-passed Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research appropriation of \$779 million for FY 2019. While this amount falls short of the \$823 million recommended by FOVA, it will help offset the potential cuts to designated VA research areas caused by chronic underfunding and new budget stressors.

FOVA appreciates that report language accompanying the House bill calls for additional research specifically related to PTSD, TBI, respiratory diseases, cancer research and clinical trials access, intergenerational effects of toxic exposure, prosthetics for females and other specialized prosthetics, neuromuscular junction regeneration research, post-deployment integrated care, and the Million Veteran Program (MVP). However, the House-approved funding level would result in no new projects in the following designated research areas, as identified in the FY 2019 VA Congressional Budget Justification:

Acute & Traumatic Injury
Aging
Cancer
Central Nervous System Injury & Associated Disorders
Degenerative Diseases of Bones & Joints
Dementia & Neuronal Degeneration
Diabetes & Major Complications
Digestive Diseases
Gulf War Research Illness
Health Systems
Heart Disease
Infectious Disease
Kidney Disorders
Lung Disorders
Military Occupations & Environmental Exposures
Prosthetics
Sensory Loss

FOVA was founded 30 years ago to ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality health care. Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations. FOVA works in concert with the *Independent Budget* veterans service organizations.

Additionally, the Administration's budget requests funding for four new areas, totaling an additional \$87.4 million for FY 2019: 1) biomedical research and development price index; 2) backup biorepository for MVP samples; 3) Secretary's priority areas of mental health, pain management, prosthetics, and MVP; and 4) a collaboration with the Department of Energy (DOE). With only a \$10 million increase over the FY 2018 funding level, the House bill would cause the VA to fall short of achieving these goals or necessitate cuts in other priority research areas. While the House report references \$27 million for the VA/DOE collaboration and \$40 million for PTSD, the funding bill is asking the VA research program to do more with insufficient funds.

Despite the documented success of VA investigators across many fields, appropriated funding for VA research has lagged far behind annual biomedical research inflation, resulting in near flat-funding since 2010. FOVA believes additional resources are necessary to expand research on emerging conditions prevalent among newer veterans, as well as to continue the VA's inquiries into chronic conditions of aging veterans from previous wartime periods.

Thank you for your continued support of VA research. We hope the impact of VA research funding shortfalls outlined above demonstrates the need for at least the Senate's \$779 million VA Medical and Prosthetic Research appropriation.

Sincerely,

The FOVA Executive Committee

cc: House and Senate members of the FY 2019 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill conference committee:

Rep. Mike Simpson

Rep. John Carter

Rep. Ken Calvert

Rep. Jeff Fortenberry

Rep. Charles Fleischmann

Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler

Rep. Scott Taylor

Rep. Nita Lowey

Rep. Marcy Kaptur

Rep. Peter Visclosky

Rep. Tim Ryan

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Senator Richard Shelby

Senator Lamar Alexander

Senator John Boozman

Senator Steve Daines

Senator James Lankford

Senator Patrick Leahy

Senator Dianne Feinstein

Senator Brian Schatz

Senator Chris Murphy