



FRIENDS OF VA MEDICAL CARE  
AND HEALTH RESEARCH

December 2, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Vice Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Murray, and Vice Chair Collins:

Thank you for your dedication to the health of our nation's veterans through your previous support of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research program. On behalf of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA) coalition, we write to urge swift enactment of a fiscal year (FY) 2025 omnibus appropriations bill, before expiration of the December 20 continuing resolution (CR), to ensure continuation of vital medical research and clinical care for our veterans. FOVA was founded over 35 years ago to ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality health care. Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing nearly 80 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations that work in concert with the Independent Budget veterans service organizations to advocate for continued, necessary funding for the research and health programs that serve the nation's veterans.

FOVA is appreciative of the bipartisan funding increases Congress has provided for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program in recent years, allowing VA to expand and excel in developing innovative treatments and diagnostics and to use cutting edge technology to care for veterans. Unfortunately, both the House-passed, and Senate Appropriations Committee-approved appropriations bills included a harmful cut to VA research. To continue this momentum, **we urge any final FY 2025 appropriations package include meaningful funding at least equivalent to the FY 2024 level of \$943 million for the VA research program and as close as possible to [FOVA's FY 2025 recommendation](#) of \$1.05 billion.**

A meaningful funding increase in FY 2025 for the VA research program would allow VA to build upon recent successes in precision oncology and bolstering VA's participation in the Cancer Moonshot Initiative, increasing clinical trials access, and addressing health disparities, while renewing support for groundbreaking programs like the Million Veteran Program (MVP) and research on chronic and emerging needs of our nation's veterans. Increased funding for the VA research program would also support recruitment and retention of researchers as they seek to grow research programs in toxic exposures and mental health following new authorities enacted in the 117th Congress. This funding will also allow for additional investments to support the strained IT capacity through computational science purchases to enhance the collection and use of large data sets. A sustained and predictable investment for VA research is imperative to help ensure the best return on investment in improving the health of veterans and all Americans.

Congressional commitment to a robust investment for VA research will ensure funding keeps pace with biomedical inflation and help advance all priority areas, including preventing veteran suicide, chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, precision oncology, and other conditions with increased incidences in veterans. The associated uncertainty and delay in enacting FY 2025 funding jeopardizes VA's ability to enter into long-term research commitments and slows the translation of research findings into high-quality, timely

health care services for veterans. Increased investments in the VA research program as soon as possible are critical to maintain previous commitments and to support research recovery.

FOVA also urges Congress to reverse harmful policies that would limit VA's ability to employ the use of animal models in valuable studies that hold promise for our veterans. For example, a current study using stem cells to treat Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) is close to clinical trials in the next three to five years. However, recent Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reviews require researchers to obtain additional data from nonhuman primates to ensure safety and effectiveness in humans. Future data from VA-funded studies is needed to enable researchers to translate findings to humans and allow the nearly 42,000 veterans living with SCIs to benefit from groundbreaking discoveries.

FOVA remains concerned about the impending budget shortfalls within the VA, which pose a significant risk to the critical services and benefits provided to our nation's veterans, particularly those related to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). FOVA urges Congress to resolve the impending budget shortfall in a manner that does not negatively impact VA's research budget.

We urge Congress to again work in a bipartisan manner to finalize and implement a meaningful appropriation as close to FOVA's FY 2025 recommendation as possible of \$1.05 billion for the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research program as quickly as possible, so veteran-centric research can continue without further interruption. We look forward to working with you towards this goal.

Sincerely,

The FOVA Executive Committee

**Roscoe Butler**

Paralyzed Veterans of America

**Gary Ewart**

American Thoracic Society

**Andrew Herrin**

Association of American Medical Colleges

**Jon Retzer**

Disabled American Veterans

**Rashi Romanoff**

National Association of Veterans Research and Education Foundations

**K. Conwell Smith**

American Psychological Association

**Jennifer Zeitzer**

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

cc:

The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate