



May 20, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders Schumer, McConnell, McCarthy, and Hoyer:

As members of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA) executive committee, we write on behalf of the coalition founded over 30 years ago to ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality health care supported by veteran-centric research conducted through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research program. Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing nearly 100 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations. FOVA works in concert with the Independent Budget veterans service organizations.

We were encouraged to see President Biden's proposed \$18 billion for VA hospital infrastructure improvements in the recently unveiled American Jobs Plan. We write to urge inclusion of this proposed funding in the next economic package considered by Congress to boost infrastructure improvements in VA's health care facilities that take care of our nation's veterans. We also write to encourage that those funds be available to improve the infrastructure of VA research space, which supports the veteran-centric mission of VA's Medical and Prosthetic Research program.

State-of-the-art research requires an investment in state-of-the-art facilities, technology, and equipment. For decades, appropriations for construction, maintenance, and information technology (IT) have not provided the resources VA needs to replace, maintain, or upgrade its aging research infrastructure. Recent re-evaluations following Congressionally mandated reports have [documented physical research infrastructure deficiencies](#), including nearly \$100 million in Priority 1 deficiencies, representing immediate repair needs such as life safety hazard corrections.

Investments in IT infrastructure are also necessary to facilitate research efforts with big data to maintain the VA research program's competitiveness in a research environment increasingly dependent on cloud computing and data science resources. We also urge infrastructure investments to provide IT support for the VA research program to allow the purchase and maintenance of IT infrastructure, increased data storage and access capabilities, enhanced data security, improved

interoperability with affiliated partners, and transition to more robust and functional cloud computing platforms.

We believe additional investments in VA research facilities and IT infrastructure are critical to sustaining a modern and competitive research program focused on veteran-centric conditions, which allows for swift translation of research findings to improved patient care.

We thank you for your commitment to our nations' veterans. We urge Congress to work in a bipartisan manner to invest in VA hospital and research facility improvements to continue supporting those who have served by providing care in world-class facilities informed by state-of-the-art research. 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

Emily Holubowich, MPP
American Heart Association

Joy Ilem
Disabled American Veterans

Rick Starrs, MBA
National Association of Veterans Research
and Education Foundations

Christa Wagner, PhD
Association of American Medical Colleges

Jennifer Zeitzer
Federation of American Societies for
Experimental Biology

cc:

Members of the Senate Military Construction, VA, and Related Agencies Appropriations
Subcommittee

Members of the House Military Construction, VA, and Related Agencies Appropriations
Subcommittee

Members of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs

Members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs

Members of the Senate Budget Committee

Members of the House Budget Committee