



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

November 16, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Lowey, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Granger:

On behalf of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA), we write to urge swift enactment of the House-passed fiscal year (FY) 2021 appropriation of \$840 million for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research program. An appropriation with this growth for FY 2021 will ensure continuation of the best medical research and clinical care for our veterans.

The coronavirus pandemic continues to place an unprecedented burden on medical researchers, including at the VA, forcing labs to shut down or slow progress, and researchers to pivot to new research and clinical trials to address COVID-19. The additional uncertainty and delayed funding created by continuing resolutions (CRs) jeopardizes VA's ability to enter into long-term research commitments and slows the translation of research findings into high-quality and timely health care services for veterans. Continuing funding at FY 2020 levels, whether through a CR or adopting the Senate's FY 2021 proposal, fails to keep pace with biomedical inflation and would impede VA research in all priority areas, including preventing veteran suicide, chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, precision oncology, COVID-19, and other acute and chronic health conditions with increased incidences in the veterans.

FOVA is appreciative of the steady, predictable 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. We are also grateful for the House-passed funding level of \$840 million for the VA research program for FY 2021, a funding level similar to [the request of Senators Durbin, Duckworth, and colleagues](#). We hope the final spending bill will reflect this continued commitment to the VA research program at this critical time.

We urge Congress to work in a bipartisan manner to finalize and implement a meaningful increase in VA research in FY 2021 so veteran-centric research can continue without interruption. We look forward to working with you towards this goal.

Sincerely,
The FOVA Executive Committee

Over 30 years ago, the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA) coalition was founded to ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality health care. Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing nearly 100 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations. FOVA organizations 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.

CC:

The Honorable John Boozman, Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Brian Schatz, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The Honorable John Carter, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies