November 8, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States, representing 31 societies and over 130,000 scientists and engineers, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) is writing to urge you to reject H.Amdt.226, which was attached to H.R. 3219, the Make America Secure Appropriations Act, 2018. H.Amdt.226, offered by Representative Dave Brat (R-VA-7), would disallow the use of funds appropriated to the Veteran’s Affairs Medical and Prosthetics Research Program “to purchase, breed, transport, house, feed, maintain, dispose of, or experiment on dogs as part of the conduct of any study assigned to pain category D or E, as defined by the Department of Agriculture.” This action would eliminate important research that will benefit the veteran community.

VA research using dogs has led to many advances, including the development of the cardiac pacemaker and more recently an artificial pancreas, which monitors glucose levels and automatically delivers the appropriate amount of insulin, enhancing the lives of diabetics. Even though the number of dogs essential to biomedical research is extremely small (0.05 percent of VA research projects utilizing animals), they remain an important research model for addressing both human and animal diseases. This is particularly true for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, epilepsy, narcolepsy, vision, and cancer research.

Passage of H.Amdt.226 will delay medical advances and will create obstacles in the quest to improve health for veterans and all Americans. We join in with our colleagues at the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science, American Brain Coalition, The American Legion, American Physiological Society, American Veterinary Medical Association, Association of the U.S. Navy, Friends of VA, Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America, National Association for Biomedical Research, National Defense Committee, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Square Deal for Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, and VA Secretary David Shulkin, MD, and implore you to reject H.Amdt.226.

Respectfully,

Thomas O. Baldwin, PhD
FASEB President
cc: The Honorable Jerry Moran
   Chairman
   U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
   Subcommittee on Military Construction,
   Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
   Washington, DC 20510

   The Honorable Brian Schatz
   Ranking Member
   U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
   Subcommittee on Military Construction,
   Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
   Washington, DC 20510