



FASEB

Federation of American Societies
for Experimental Biology

Representing Over 130,000 Researchers

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May 14, 2019

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Military Construction,
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Schatz,

As the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States, representing 29 societies and over 130,000 scientists and engineers, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) urges you to reject language included in Sec.247 of the FY2020 House VA Military Construction Appropriations bill regarding canines in biomedical research. This language would prohibit “the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to purchase, breed, transport, house, feed, maintain, dispose of, or experiment on, dogs as part of the conduct of any study including an assignment of pain category D or E, as defined by the Pain and Distress Categories of the Department of Agriculture.” If passed, this language would effectively terminate mission-critical research that will benefit the veteran community.

VA research using dogs has led to numerous health advances, including the development of the cardiac pacemaker and more recently a cough stimulator, which assists veterans with spinal cord injuries to breathe without a ventilator and cough effectively, dramatically improving their quality of life. 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, and vision. All canines in VA research are purpose-bred by vendors specifically for research (Class A USDA breeders), as required by the Public Health Service Act and VA policy. The VA adheres to the humane use of animals in scientifically necessary, ethically conducted studies and does not tolerate abuse of animals.

This canine research policy will adversely delay medical advances and create obstacles in the quest to improve health for veterans and all Americans. We implore you to preclude inserting such language in the FY2020 Senate VA Military Construction Appropriations bill.

Respectfully,

James M. Musser, MD, PhD
FASEB President