

February 8, 2017

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi, and Minority Leader Schumer:

The undersigned organizations urge you to complete final negotiations on the fiscal year 2017 Defense Appropriations Act and move the bill expeditiously through the House and Senate toward enactment. Any further delay in completing the fiscal year 2017 defense budget, or subjecting the defense budget to a long-term continuing resolution, will inflict irreversible damage on the Defense Health Research Programs at the Department of Defense (DoD).

Most importantly, failure to enact a final bill will have major negative health implications for the millions of Americans – especially veterans – suffering from chronic and debilitating disorders. This will delay important new discoveries and translation of medical innovation into new treatments and cures for many disorders.

We collectively represent millions of American veterans, military retirees, military families, and civilians who benefit from the ongoing research funded by the Defense Health Research Programs at DoD. We have worked tirelessly to advocate for continued funding for the programs, and we were pleased to see that both the House and Senate versions of the fiscal year 2017 Defense Appropriations Act include strong funding levels for medical research.

Now operating under a continuing resolution for nearly four months, the Defense Health Research Programs are unable to fully prepare for the fiscal year 2017 grant solicitation process until they receive a fully-enacted fiscal year 2017 budget. Further delay will create unnecessary instability and uncertainty in the grant solicitation, grant review, and grant making processes at DoD. This will also delay the ability of DoD to most effectively convene programmatic panels to identify and implement programmatic changes, effectively convene peer-review panels to provide thorough review of grant applications, and conduct appropriate negotiations to ultimately award FY17 grants. This also will compromise the ability of scientific laboratories across the U.S to effectively plan and prepare the highest quality grant applications, potentially diminishing opportunities to maintain discovery-based research programs.

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Continued delay in enacting the fiscal year 2017 Defense Appropriations Act increases the risk that the defense budget will be subjected to a year-long continuing resolution, which could result in no grants awarded during the entire duration of the fiscal year. Aside from the obvious biomedical and economic consequences of such actions, such as stalling or eliminating the critical development of new and more effective therapies that lower costs and save lives, failure to enact will interrupt important pipelines that have allowed young researchers at U.S. universities to build careers and act on new and innovative medical research ideas.

Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have worked hard to make important programmatic and funding changes to the defense health programs included in their respective versions of the FY17 Defense Appropriations Act. These efforts, and those made by the American research community to prepare for new research opportunities, will be wasted if Congress does not complete its work. We therefore urge you to work together in a bipartisan, bicameral spirit and complete the fiscal year 2017 appropriations process.

Sincerely,

Action to Cure Kidney Cancer
Adult Congenital Heart Association
ALS Association
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Brain Tumor Association
American Diabetes Association
American Lung Association
American Thoracic Society
American Urological Association
Aplastic Anemia and MDS International Foundation
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
Children's Heart Foundation
Children's Tumor Foundation
Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America
CureHHT
Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer
Digestive Disease National Council
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
Fight Colorectal Cancer
FORCE: Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered
Foundation to Eradicate Duchenne
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Hepatitis Foundation International

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International Foundation for Functional GI Disorders
International Myeloma Foundation
Interstitial Cystitis Association
Littlest Tumor Foundation
Living Beyond Breast Cancer
Lung Cancer Alliance
Lupus Research Alliance
Lymphoma Research Foundation
Malecare Cancer Support
Melanoma Research Foundation
Men's Health Network
METAvivor
The Michael J. Fox Foundation
Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA)
National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research
National Association of Nurse Practitioners In Women's Health
National Autism Association
National Kidney Foundation
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
NephCure Kidney International
Neurofibromatosis Midwest
Neurofibromatosis Network
Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy (PPMD)
Prostate Conditions Education Council
Pulmonary Hypertension Association
Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association
Scleroderma Foundation
Sleep Research Society
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
Susan G. Komen
Texas NF Foundation
Tuberous Sclerosis Alliance
US Hereditary Angioedema Association
Us TOO Prostate Cancer Education & Support
Veterans for Common Sense
Vietnam Veterans of America
Veterans Health Council
ZERO-The End of Prostate Cancer

cc: House and Senate Committees on Appropriations
Members of the U.S. House and Senate