

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