



November 30, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen and Cochran:

NABR, on behalf of its more than 360 member institutions and their hundreds-of-thousands of employees who engage in biomedical research with animal models, writes to express concerns with H.R. 3197, the “PUPPERS” Act, and a similar amendment offered by Rep. Dave Brat (R-VA) to the Defense, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, Legislative Branch, and Energy and Water Development National Security Appropriations Act, 2018.

NABR members include universities, medical and veterinary schools, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, and other research-intensive programs including numerous medical research centers across the country, that are dedicated to the development of diagnostics, treatments, and cures for both humans and animals. Biomedical research projects involving animals are governed by numerous local, state and federal laws, regulations and guidelines, and continue to yield invaluable data in the development of new therapies to treat disease. Cancer therapies, vaccines, organ transplants, cardiovascular surgeries, medications, and many other medical innovations have been developed through research conducted at our member institutions.

We echo statements by the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS), American Brain Coalition (ABC), American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM), The American Legion, American Physiological Society (APS), American Psychological Association (APA), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), Association of the U.S. Navy (AUSN), Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), Friends of VA (FOVA), Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), National Defense Committee, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Square Deal for Veterans, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary David Shulkin, MD, the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), and a recent letter undersigned by over 40 medical and scientific organizations and research institutions in opposition to these proposals. Animal models, including canines, remain vital to scientific discovery to better understand diseases and disorders, and to develop treatments and countermeasures to improve human and animal life. Dogs are not the most common biomedical research model, but researchers work with dogs only when no other model can be used for a particular study. While nearly 95% of animals in research are rats and mice; dogs account for less than 1% of all research animals. At the VA, 0.05% of research animals are dogs and the number of dogs used at the VA today has decreased 90% since 1995.

Dogs are an incredibly important species in medical discovery. They have been and continue to be extremely vital to medical development. The cardiac pacemaker, the first liver transplant, nicotine patch, and the discovery of insulin were all developed through research with dogs. Canines are currently playing a vital role in the moonshot to end cancer, aging and Alzheimer's, heart disease, diabetes. Most recently, the first FDA-approved artificial pancreas was brought to fruition because of work at the VA. Additionally, 22 of the 25 most prescribed medications were brought to patients' bedsides thanks to research with canines.

Canine research has also led to many significant advances in veterinary medicine. Vaccinations against infectious diseases, some devastating, such as canine distemper, parvovirus, rabies, coronavirus, leptospirosis, Lyme disease, measles, and hepatitis have all been developed through research with canines. Health issues affecting companion animals, such as heartworm and a variety of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks, mites and mange can be prevented and treated thanks to research with canines.

H.R. 3197 and a similar amendment to the homeland security "minibus" would effectively end critical studies at the VA. If enacted, this action would mark the first time in our nation's history that Congress, instead of doctors and research scientists, has decided which animal models are appropriate for scientific research, which could lead to unintended and serious consequences for human and animal health.

NABR supports efforts by scientists to reduce the number of animals needed in research and to replace animals when possible. NABR believes that the use of any animal in medical research protocols must be conducted with the utmost respect and humane care must be a top priority. However, these misdirected efforts by Reps. Brat, Brian Mast (R-FL), and Dina Titus (D-NV) could lead to stymied medical progress for our nation's veterans.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to submit our concerns. I invite you to visit our website at www.nabr.org/biomedical-research/laboratory-animals/species-in-research/dogs/ to learn more about the importance of canines in research.

Sincerely,



Matthew R. Bailey
President
NABR

CC:

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Phil Roe, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable Tim Walz, Ranking Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Johnny Isakson, Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
The Honorable John Tester, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs