



THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY  
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212.308.1414 TEL 212.832.8646 FAX  
[www.americangeriatrics.org](http://www.americangeriatrics.org)

March 24, 2017

The Honorable Charlie Dent  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Military Construction,  
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Military Construction,  
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dent and Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz:

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) respectfully requests your strong support for increased funding for the Medical and Prosthetic Research Program within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in FY 2018. The AGS is a national non-profit organization comprised of nearly 6,000 geriatrics healthcare professionals and basic and clinical researchers specializing in aging. Many of our members work for the VA healthcare system or are affiliated with the VA, serving in a variety of roles to advise VA leadership on the unique needs of older, medically complex veterans; lead the demonstration of new care models; perform cutting-edge research; and train the VA workforce to provide the highest standard of care for older veterans and their families.

As a member of the Friends of the VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA)—a diverse coalition representing national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations—the AGS requests that the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program be funded at \$713 million in FY 2018. We are requesting a \$38 million increase (5.33 percent) from the enacted FY 2017 level of \$675 million; since at least \$19 million is needed to account for biomedical research inflation to keep VA research funding at current-service levels and an additional \$19 million is needed to sustain support of research on chronic conditions of aging veterans and conditions prevalent among Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans. This amount will also help offset the reprioritization of designated VA research areas exacerbated by chronic underfunding and new budget challenges, including the Million Veterans Program (MVP) which received \$65 million in the FY 2017 budget for VA research without a corresponding increase in funding. While we recognize that the VA is uniquely positioned to advance genomic medicine through the MVP, we believe that this program should not impede other critical VA research.

We know that sustained and enhanced federal investments in VA research are essential to delivering high-quality, coordinated, and efficient care to our nation's growing population of aging veterans. Approximately 45 percent of the 21 million veterans in the U.S. are 65 or older, and more than 1.5 million are over age 85—including almost 700,000 surviving World War II veterans. The VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program aims to improve the health of our veterans and to lay the groundwork for improved care within the VA—the largest managed healthcare system in the nation.

The VA research program funds nearly 2,000 high-priority research projects. This work expands knowledge in areas critical to veterans' healthcare needs, most notably for enhanced understanding of mental illness, aging, health services delivery, cancer, and heart disease.

VA researchers continue to provide benefits to veterans and all Americans. Today, VA researchers are on the cutting-edge of research on Alzheimer's disease; diabetes; exercise in the elderly; prosthetic limb use; safety considerations and quality improvement for healthcare settings; management and rehabilitation from stroke and traumatic brain injury; end-of-life care models; osteoporosis and osteoarthritis diagnosis, management, and prevention; and the use of electronic technology for telemedicine, telemonitoring, and tele-education. The VA develops and supports innovative health research initiatives, including demonstration programs that focus on high-priority issues important to the health and well-being of aging veterans and their caregivers. For example, CREATE (Collaborative Research to Enhance Transformation and Excellence), a Health Services Research and Development program, is helping push research findings into frontline care and is an integral part of evaluating new models of care delivery for the older VA population.

In addition, the VA plays a critical role in nurturing health scientists across their careers. In order to recruit and retain talented researchers, sufficient funding is needed to support the promising and often groundbreaking research undertaken by new investigators. Support also helps sustain important work and mentoring conducted by those with long-standing experience in the field of aging research.

The VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Program is committed to ground-breaking, high-quality research. We are concerned that without adequate appropriations, the VA will be unable to train a new generation of investigators to deliver on the program's legacy of quality care and innovation. Congress must ensure that we can properly care for our older veterans who fought for our country across its history—past, present, and future.

Thank you for your consideration of this funding request. If you have comments or questions about VA funding or other issues related to the well-being and healthy aging of older veterans, please contact Anna Mikhailovich, Manager of Public Affairs & Advocacy, at 212-308-1414 or [amikhailovich@americangeriatrics.org](mailto:amikhailovich@americangeriatrics.org).

Sincerely,



**Ellen Flaherty, PhD, APRN, AGSF**  
President



**Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA**  
Chief Executive Officer



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

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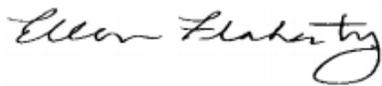
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