



April 13, 2026

The Honorable Senator John Boozman
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Jon Ossoff
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Congressman John Carter
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

The Honorable Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies

Dear Chair, Ranking Member and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the undersigned scientific, medical, veterinary, and academic organizations, we write to express concern regarding Section 246 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies (MilCon-VA) appropriations bill.¹ This provision directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to eliminate research involving dogs, cats, and nonhuman primates by September 30, 2026, unless specifically approved by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. We respectfully urge the Committees to remove or amend Section 246 in the FY 2027 MilCon-VA appropriations bill.

While we support the responsible and evidence-based reduction of animal use in biomedical research where scientifically appropriate, this provision establishes an arbitrary deadline that could prematurely terminate research programs that directly benefit veterans. It also departs from prior congressional guidance encouraging the VA to eliminate or reduce the use of sensitive species in research *while maintaining flexibility for scientifically justified research*.

The VA research program plays a critical role in addressing the unique health challenges faced by veterans, including combat-related neurobehavioral disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), loss of limb, spinal cord injury, and traumatic brain injury. Many of the medical advances that now benefit veterans, including prosthetic technologies, neural interface systems, and trauma care innovations, have relied on carefully regulated animal research before reaching injured veterans and other patients.

¹ H.R.3944 - Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, and Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2026: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/3944/text>

Veteran-focused research supported or conducted by the VA has led to transformative medical breakthroughs that depend on animal models, including implantable cardiac pacemakers, spinal cord injury therapies, neural prosthetics, brain-computer interfaces, cochlear implants, and optimized trauma and burn care protocols ². These advances have improved outcomes for millions of veterans and civilians alike ^{3 4 5}. Continued progress in these biomedical research areas will similarly require access to the full range of scientifically validated research methods – including animal research and testing.

Several ongoing VA research efforts are approaching clinical translation. Prematurely terminating these studies will delay promising therapies for conditions that disproportionately affect veterans and will undermine prior federal investment in biomedical advancements.

Animal research conducted or supported by the VA operates under rigorous oversight, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Animal Welfare Act, National Institutes of Health (NIH)'s Public Health Service Policy, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) review, and voluntary AAALAC International accreditation. These safeguards ensure that animal research is conducted only when scientifically necessary, with the minimum number of animals and the species most suitable for the research at hand, and when no validated alternative exists.

Emerging non-animal research methods, such as organs-on-chips, advanced cell culture systems, and AI-based modeling, are promising, but they cannot fully replicate whole-body biological systems over time or fully replace safety and efficacy measurements needed to validate new drugs, medical devices, and surgical innovations. ^{6 7 8}

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committees to remove or amend Section 246, which directs the elimination of research involving dogs, cats, and nonhuman primates by Sept. 30, 2026, in the FY 2027 MilCon-VA appropriations bill. At a minimum, Congress should amend the section by removing the arbitrary deadline for eliminating such research.

Maintaining a balanced, science-driven approach will allow the VA to continue responsible efforts to reduce animal use while ensuring that critical research programs supporting veteran health care and medical innovation are not inadvertently disrupted.

² The Foundation for Biomedical Research Top Medical Devices Developed with Animal Research. Last Updated Dec. 2025. Available online at: <https://fbresearch.org/top-devices>

³ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Research & Development. *About the Office of Research and Development* <https://www.research.va.gov/about/>

⁴ National Institutes of Health. *Why Are Animals Used in Research*. <https://grants.nih.gov/policy-and-compliance/policy-topics/air/why-animals-are-used-in-research>

⁵ Bouton, C.E. et al. (2016). *Restoring cortical control of functional movement in a human with quadriplegia*. *Nature*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature17435>

⁶ “Human Organ-On-A-Chip: Technologies Offer Benefits Over Animal Testing but Challenges Limit Wider Adoption,” U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report, May 21, 2025, available online at: <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-107335>

⁷ “NABR Responds to FDA’s Plan on Reducing Animal Testing,” www.nabr.org, April 10, 2026, available online at: <https://www.nabr.org/about-nabr/news/nabr-statement-fda-animal-testing>

⁸ “NABR’s Press Statement on the FDA Modernization Act 2.0,” www.nabr.org, March 16, 2026, available online at: <https://www.nabr.org/about-nabr/news/nabrs-press-statement-fda-modernization-act-20>

We do not want our researchers to be barred from the appropriate use of any of the tools we might need to help advance the care of our veterans.

Sincerely,

Academy of Laboratory Animal Veterinary Technicians and Nurses (ALAVTN)
Allentown, LLC
American Association of Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS)
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC)
American Brain Coalition
American College of Laboratory Animal Medicine (ACLAM)
American Physiological Society (APS)
American Psychological Association Services, Inc.
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET)
American Society of Laboratory Animal Practitioners (ASLAP)
American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)
Americans for Medical Progress (AMP)
Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)
Association of Primate Veterinarians (APV)
BCI Pioneers Coalition
Bio-Serv
California Biomedical Research Association
Community Behavioral Services
Craig H. Neilsen Foundation
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)
JJS DVM Consulting LLC
Midwest Veterinary Services
National Association of Veterans' Research and Education Foundations (NAVREF)
New Moo Vet PLLC
NorCal SCI
Northeast Ohio Medical University (NEOMED)
Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research (PRIM&R)
Safer Human Medicine
Society for Neuroscience (SfN)
Texas Society for Biomedical Research
Unite 2 Fight Paralysis
University of Southern California

Cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies