

PROVIDE \$5 MILLION FOR THE LUPUS MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM IN THE FY 2018 DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Lupus Advocacy Day 2017

Problem: Lupus is a chronic, debilitating autoimmune disease. More than 90% of people with lupus are women, mostly young women between the ages of 15 to 44. African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans are especially at risk. In lupus, the immune system, which is designed to protect against infection, creates antibodies that attack the body's own tissues and organs -- the kidneys, brain, heart, lungs, blood, skin, and joints.

Situation: Defense Department data show that women now make up a much greater share of our armed forces than they have at any time in U.S. history. Women account for almost 15 percent of active duty Service Members, almost 20 percent of Reserves and 16 percent of the National Guard. A recent Pew Research Center report found that the active-duty female force is racially diverse - nearly one-third (31%) of active-duty women are black (including black Hispanics). Twelve (12) percent of women in the Armed Forces report their ethnicity as Hispanic, whether white or black. Our nation now has over 2 million women veterans, about 9 percent of the total veteran population, a figure expected to rise to 15 percent by 2035.

A new, dedicated peer-review medical research program for lupus was included under the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program in the House of Representative's 2017 Defense Appropriations bill with \$5 million allocated. (The final Fiscal 2017 appropriations bill is still under consideration by the Congress.)

Previously, Congress for many years included lupus as an eligible disease for study under the Peer-Reviewed Medical Research Program operated by the Defense Department.

Solution: In light of the increasing numbers of women serving, in addition to the high numbers of female dependents being treated at military health facilities each year, the Lupus Research Alliance requests that for 2018 Congress support a \$5 million Lupus Medical Research Program under the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program operated by the Department of Defense.

These research activities will help lead to new treatment options and a better understanding of the mechanisms of this devastating chronic disease that affects millions, including many active duty military, dependents and retired veterans. The Lupus Research Alliance appreciates and commends Congressional understanding of the need for additional peer-reviewed lupus research and urges continued support for this program.

The Lupus Research Alliance urges Congress to support a \$5 million Lupus Medical Research Program in the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program operated under the Defense Health Program in the FY 2018 Defense Appropriations Bill.

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**LUPUS
RESEARCH
ALLIANCE**

Born from the merger of three organizations with a common belief in the potential for science to overcome lupus, the Lupus Research Alliance is at the forefront of driving innovative research that can make a difference for people living with the prototypical autoimmune disease. With that shared conviction, the Board of Directors promises to cover all administrative and operating costs of the organization, ensuring that 100% of all donations go directly to funding research programs in order to realize our vision of a world free of lupus.