

Durbin, bipartisan senators, medical and veterans groups call on Senate: Don't strangle medical research funding in red tape

June 7 2016 1:12 PM



Two provisions in NDAA would effectively end medical research in DoD and jeopardize the health of military families and veterans

WASHINGTON—This morning, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) was joined by a breast cancer survivor and a disabled American veteran to call on the Senate to protect medical research funding in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

For more than twenty years, the Department of Defense's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) has achieved medical research breakthroughs for service members, military families, and veterans. But two provisions inserted into this year's NDAA would strangle this program in red tape, effectively halting that progress and jeopardizing the health of military families and veterans. Durbin's amendment (#4369), co-sponsored by 37 Republican and Democratic senators, would nullify these provisions to protect this research program.

"At a time in America when we need medical research - for breast cancer, for brain disease, Alzheimer's - for all of the things that are facing us, why would we cut back on medical research? It's a serious mistake," said Senator Durbin. "Over 143 medical research associations across the United States and many veterans groups have come out against Chairman McCain's language. I hope we have an overwhelming bipartisan vote against Chairman McCain's effort to end this medical research through the Department of Defense. This research is essential for giving the men and women in the military and those who have served the kind of medical research that can give them hope for their future and cure the diseases that they face."

"It is absolutely critical that we maintain funding for research into causes, treatments, and therapies for diseases that affect those who serve on the battlefield, their spouses, and dependents," said Senator Murkowski (R-AK), a co-sponsor of the amendment. "It is especially important to support ALS research, which is presumptively service-connected and for reasons still unexplained, has a much higher rate of incidence among military members than members of the public. And with an ever-increasing number of women serving in the military, it is equally important that our nation continues its commitment to breast cancer research. Medical research in the Defense Department is another way we demonstrate to those who place their lives on the line that the American people have their back."

Since 1992, Congress has provided more than \$11.7 billion to researchers in universities and laboratories all across the country to conduct life-saving research on numerous diseases and conditions that impact military members, veterans, and their families.

Senator McCain's proposal would block DoD from researching the medical needs of military families and veterans (section 756), and subject doctors and scientists to the level of scrutiny currently reserved for complex, multi-million dollar weapons systems (section 898). This would needlessly bog down their research in months – or even years – of additional bureaucracy.

The Durbin amendment is co-sponsored by 37 senators, including Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS), Harry Reid (D-NV), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD),

Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Patty Murray (D-WA), Susan Collins (R-ME), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Richard Shelby (R-AL), Bob Casey (D-PA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Edward Markey (D-MA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH),), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Jack Reed (D-RI), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Jon Tester (D-MT), Chris Coons (D-DE), Mark Kirk (R-IL), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tom Udall (D-NM), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Bernie Sanders (D-VT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Gary Peters (D-MI), Al Franken (D-MN), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Bill Nelson (D-FL).