

Senate passes Durbin amendment to protect medical research for servicemembers, military families, veterans

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Nullifies two provisions in NDAA that would have strangled military medical research in red tape and jeopardized the health of military families and veterans

WASHINGTON — The Senate today voted 66-32 to pass a bipartisan amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to protect medical research in the Department of Defense. 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 have strangled this program in red tape, effectively halting that progress and jeopardizing the health of military families and veterans.

Offered by U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and co-sponsored by 37 Republican and Democratic senators, the amendment nullified these provisions in order to protect this research program.

“This is about medical research, and if it seems I have a passion for this subject, I do. Most of us do,” said Durbin. “There comes a point in your life where you get a diagnosis—news about someone you love—and you pray to goodness that there’s been some research to develop a drug, or a procedure, or a device that gives them a chance for life. Do I want to invest more money in medical research so there are more chances for life? You bet I do. And I believe our highest priority should be the men and women in uniform, their families, and our veterans. That’s why I’ll stand here today and defend this Department of Defense medical research program as long as I have breath in my lungs. Because I believe it’s essential that once we’ve made that promise to men and women in uniform—that we’ll stand by them—we keep our word.”

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 have blocked DoD from researching the medical needs of military families and veterans (section 756), and subjected doctors and scientists to the level of scrutiny currently reserved for complex, multi-million dollar weapons systems (section 898). It would have needlessly bogged down their research in months – or even years – of additional bureaucracy.

The Durbin amendment was 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).

