

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 24, 2015

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Pete Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Visclosky:

Thank you for your interest in and continued support of the Gulf War Illness Research Program (GWIRP) within the Department of Defense (DoD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP). As your Subcommittee begins work on FY2016 DoD appropriations, we respectfully request adequate funding for the GWIRP.

Since its inception, the GWIRP has demonstrated significant progress in developing treatments for Gulf War Illness. The 2014 report of the Congressionally-mandated Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses (RAC), which built on landmark RAC 2008 and Institute of Medicine (IOM) 2010 reports, concluded:

- “Scientific research [since 2008].... supports and further substantiates .... that Gulf War illness is a serious physical disease, affecting at least 175,000 veterans of the 1990-1991 Gulf War, that resulted from hazardous exposures in the Gulf War theater.”
- “Symptoms typically include some combination of widespread pain, headache, persistent problems with memory and thinking, fatigue, breathing problems, stomach and intestinal symptoms, and skin abnormalities.”
- “Research has found an elevated incidence of ALS [Lou Gehrig’s Disease],” and “Gulf War veterans who were most exposed to the release of nerve gas by the destruction of the Khamisiyah Iraqi arms depot have significantly elevated rates of death due to brain cancer.” There are concerns for the health of this vulnerable population as time progresses.
- “Treatment research has increased significantly since 2008, particularly reflecting the work of the Gulf War Illness Research Program [at] CDMRP. . . Early results provide encouraging signs that the treatment goals identified in the 2010 Institute of Medicine report are achievable: ‘to speed the development of effective treatments, cures, and, it is hoped, preventions.’”
- “Important progress has been made ... However, much work remains to be done.”

The 2014 RAC report also noted the relevance of this research “to protect the health of current and future American servicemen and women at risk of similar exposures.”

The GWIRP has shown itself to be a model on how to conduct treatment-oriented research to address a challenging illness, and is succeeding where earlier programs failed.

- By Congressional design, the GWIRP is narrowly focused on “improving the health and lives of veterans who have Gulf War Illness,” by funding “innovative Gulf War Illness research to identify effective treatments, improve definition and diagnosis, and better understand pathobiology and symptoms.”
- GWIRP’s highly competitive, multi-stage peer-reviewed process is open to all researchers, whereas VA research is restricted to VA staff, few of whom have expertise in this rapidly-evolving, cutting-edge area.
- GWIRP-funded research aimed at unlocking GWI’s underlying mechanisms is showing great promise, and has found that even low-dose chemical warfare agent and/or pesticide exposure leads to persistent brain changes associated with GWI; evidence of a GWI chronic central nervous system inflammatory state; a potential explanation of GWI immunological dysfunction; inflammation and immune dysfunction in GWI after exercise challenge; evidence suggesting small fiber peripheral neuropathy in a subset of GWI veterans; lipid dysfunction following GWI exposures; and other findings important to aiding veterans with GWI.
- GWIRP’s efforts are steadily advancing, with 73 studies – most of which are still in process – at research universities and institutes in 22 states and DC.

The interest in the scientific community created by the landmark RAC and IOM reports, consistent Congressional support, effective GWIRP management, and scientific discoveries in related fields are making possible significant advances towards GWIRP’s goals.

In view of this progress, the 2014 RAC report recommends that “Congress should maintain its funding to support the effective treatment-oriented [GWIRP].” The 57 Independent Budget Veterans Service Organizations recommend Congress provide sufficient funding for “robust research to identify effective treatments.” This request is supported by the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America, Sergeant Sullivan Center, National Vietnam and Gulf War Veterans Coalition, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans for Common Sense.

We respectfully request that you provide the necessary resources to continue this vital and effective program.

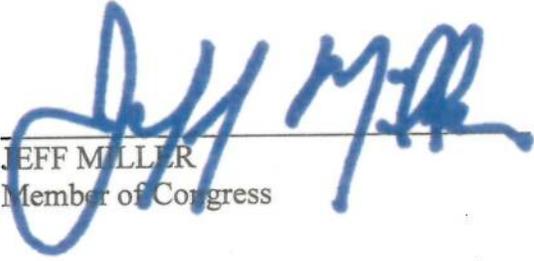
Sincerely,



PHIL ROE, M.D.  
Member of Congress



TIM WALZ  
Member of Congress



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JEFF MILLER  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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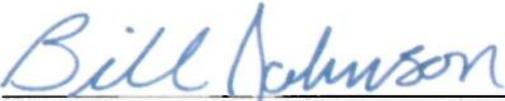
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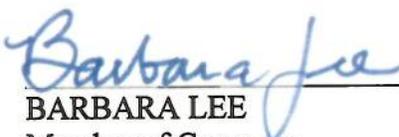
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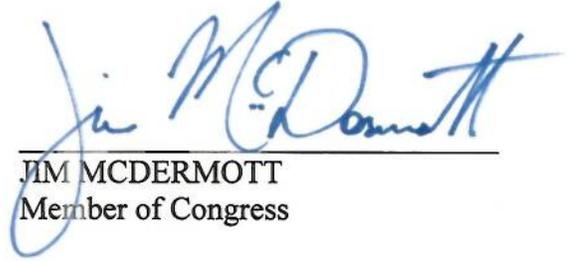
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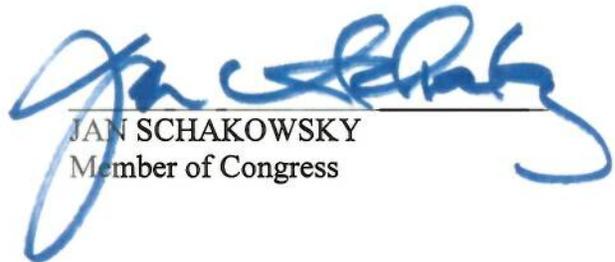
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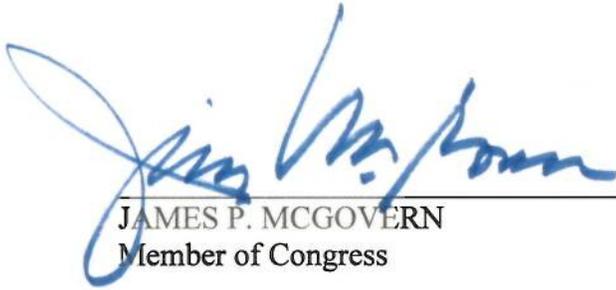
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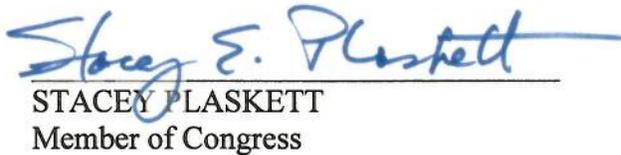
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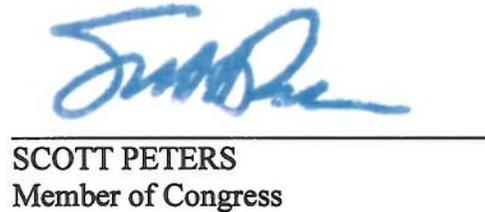
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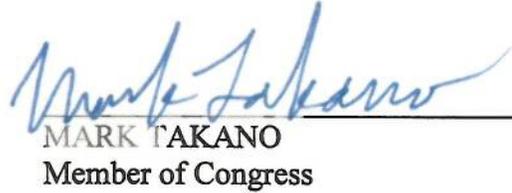
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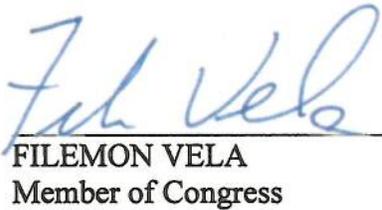
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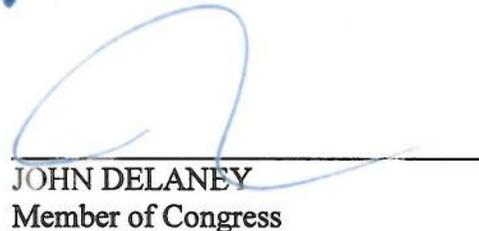
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