

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2019

The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
H-405, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
H-405, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

As your Subcommittee begins work on the Fiscal Year 2020 Defense Appropriations Bill, we respectfully request adequate funding for the Gulf War Illness Research Program within the Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP). We also thank you for providing the program \$22 million in Fiscal Year 2019.

By congressional design, the GWIRP is a unique medical research program narrowly focused on the vision of improving the health and lives of Veterans with Gulf War Illness. Reports by the congressionally-mandated Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses (RAC) and the National Academy of Sciences (NASEM) have shown that: 1) GWI is a physical condition – likely caused by toxic exposures – that affects up to one-third of the nearly 700,000 veterans who served in the 1991 Persian Gulf War; 2) Debilitating GWI 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."^{1, 2}

Two-thirds of GWIRP studies are still in progress. However, the positive news is that there is a growing body of GWIRP-funded study results, many published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, that demonstrate steady advances of GWIRP's goals of identifying underlying mechanisms, diagnostic markers, and treatments. For example, the GWIRP-funded consortia at Boston University and Nova Southeastern University identified several potential treatments through their interdisciplinary preclinical and computational biology research projects. Those treatments will now be tested in the Gulf War Illness Clinical Trials and Interventions Consortium, which will include five clinical trials at seven study sites to target GWI's inflammation, energy production, and immune function issues.³ Additionally, the GWIRP-funded Boston Biorepository, Recruitment, and Integrative Network will aggregate biological samples and data to further advance GWI diagnostic marker efforts. These successes are the direct result

¹ Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "*Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans: Research Update and Recommendations, 2009-2013*," 2014.

² National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine, "*Gulf War and Health, Volume 8: Update of Health Effects of Serving in the Gulf War*," 2010

³ GWIRP: https://cdmrp.army.mil/gwirp/research_highlights/18klimas_highlight

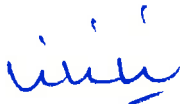
of clear, treatment-focused congressional direction, stable appropriations for the GWIRP, and effective GWIRP management.

Recognizing the program's progress, the most recent RAC report's recommendations remain instructive: "Congress should maintain its funding to support the effective treatment-oriented [GWIRP]."⁴ The discoveries through the program continue to represent encouraging steps toward achieving the 2010 NASEM treatment goals "to speed the development of effective treatments, cures, and, it is hoped, preventions" for current and future U.S. forces at risk of similar exposures and outcomes. Indeed, the GWIRP has served as a model of how to conduct treatment-oriented research to address a challenging illness and is succeeding where earlier programs failed. Its two-tier peer-reviewed and highly competitive process ensures the independence and value of the results produced. Unlike the VA's GWI research program which only funds VA researchers, GWIRP seeks out and funds the best research by any combination of government, academic, or private-sector research teams.

We respectfully request that you provide the necessary resources to continue this vital and effective program in the FY20 Defense Appropriations Bill. Furthermore, it is critical to the program's success and accountability that it remains a stand-alone program within the CDMRP and not be combined as a topic area within broader, less-targeted research programs.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, which is supported by the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Veterans for Common Sense, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), National Gulf War Resource Center, Burn Pits 360, Sgt. Sullivan Circle, National Vietnam & Gulf War Veterans Coalition.

Sincerely,



GREGORIO KILIBI CAMACHO SABLAN
Member of Congress



MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress



JACK BERGMAN
Member of Congress



DAVID P. ROE, M.D.
Member of Congress

⁴ Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans: Research Update and Recommendations, 2009-2013," 2014.



PETER A. DEFAZIO
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



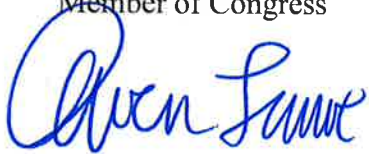
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Member of Congress



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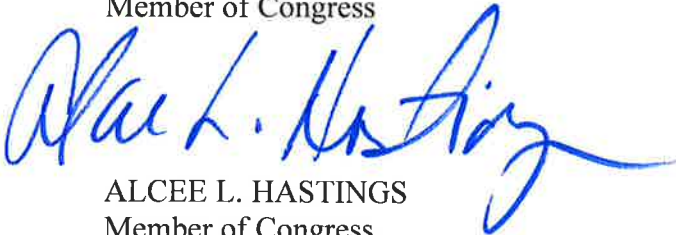
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Member of Congress



GWEN MOORE
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



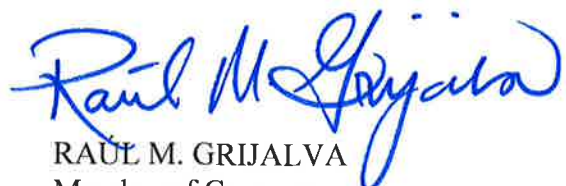
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



ANN MCLANE KUSTER
Member of Congress



RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

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RON KIND
Member of Congress



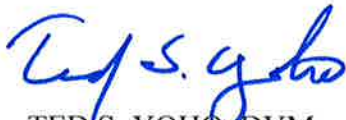
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ED PERLMUTTER
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Member of Congress



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STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress



SCOTT PETERS
Member of Congress



JACKIE SPEIER
Member of Congress



JAHANA HAYES
Member of Congress

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VERONICA ESCOBAR
Member of Congress



DIANA DEGETTE
Member of Congress



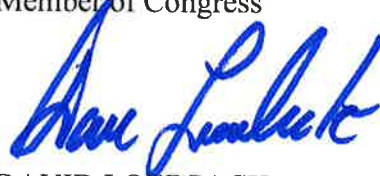
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress



ADRIANO ESPALLAT
Member of Congress



GILBERT R. CISNEROS, JR.
Member of Congress



CHRIS PAPPAS
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



PAUL A. GOSAR, D.D.S.
Member of Congress

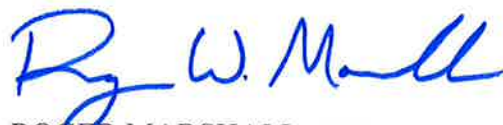
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DONNA E. SHALALA
Member of Congress



CEDRIC L. RICHMOND
Member of Congress



ROGER MARSHALL, M.D.
Member of Congress