

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 31, 2006

Chairman Ted Stevens
Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Daniel K. Inouye
Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Stevens and Ranking Member Inouye:

We appreciate your past support of biomedical research critical to people suffering from neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) that is being conducted by the Department of Defense's Neurotoxin Exposure Treatment Program (NETRP). We respectfully request \$49 million for NETRP in the U.S. Army Military Operational Medicine Research Program under the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command for Fiscal Year 2007.

American troops are routinely exposed to a wide range of chemicals, low-level radiation and other external stressors and toxins such as jet fuel, radar, sonar, lasers, pesticides, herbicides and head injury. Scientists believe these factors increase the risk of developing neurodegenerative conditions, particularly Parkinson's disease, but also Alzheimer's and ALS. These conditions negatively impact the readiness of American military forces since they result in the permanent loss of brain and nerve cells.

NETRP was established to investigate the causes, diagnosis, and treatments of Parkinson's and other neurodegenerative diseases. Understanding how exposures occur, the incidence of disease, and how these conditions may be effectively treated or prevented will help the Department of Defense (DoD) protect military personnel and minimize the risk of future exposures. The scientific findings from biomedical research conducted through NETRP may provide DoD with innovations in material design, avoidance protocols for unnecessary harmful exposures and neuroprotective drugs to prevent damage. Furthermore, the early detection of nerve cell loss caused by such toxic exposures may provide DoD with better methods of evaluating warfighter performance and faster ways of detecting potential impairments, which may contribute to greater military preparedness.

However, the military is not the only recipient of the benefits of NETRP. Any research breakthroughs in prevention, detection and treatment of neurodegenerative conditions may be immediately applied to civilians—particularly the more than one million Americans with Parkinson's disease and the 60,000 people diagnosed each year.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to provide the DoD peer-reviewed NETRP with \$49 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2007. This level of funding is necessary to prevent cuts to critical NETRP funded research projects. This is not an expansion of the program; rather, it is the funding NETRP needs to fulfill its mission and continue its research.

Thank you again for your continued leadership and support for this essential program.

Sincerely,



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate

Jeff Murr

Pete Domenici

Marty Lange

Frank R. Lautenberg

Patty Murray

Bill Wy

Chuck Schumer

Bob Dole

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Joe Biden

Paul Sarbanes

Ken Salazar

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Dick Durbin

Barbara Boxer

Tom Harkin

Elizabeth Dole

Chris Dodd

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