FRIENDS OF VA MEDICAL CARE AND HEALTH RESEARCH **FOVA**

FOVA Recommendations for FY 2022, Department of Veterans Affairs

MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

FY 2020 Enacted (P.L. 116-94)	FY 2021 Enacted (P.L. 116-260)	**FOVA FY 2022 Recommendation**
$800 million	$815 million	**$902 million**
Prior year rescission: $50 million	Prior year rescission: $20 million	+$87 million (10.7%) above FY 2021 program level

The coronavirus pandemic continues to place an unprecedented burden on medical researchers, including those conducting cutting-edge research at the Department of Veterans Affairs. FOVA recognizes the demands of many important programs for America's veterans in the Military Construction, VA, and Related Agencies spending bill, and urges Congress to restore the VA research program to the sustained funding growth of recent years, without deleterious rescissions. FOVA's FY 2022 recommendation of $902 million for VA research would return the investment in veteran-centric research to a trajectory of meaningful growth above inflation, allowing for new efforts to address COVID-19, health disparities, and clinical trials access, while renewing support for groundbreaking programs like the Million Veteran Program (MVP) and research on chronic and emerging needs of our nation's veterans. Included within the FY 2022 recommendation is $29 million for additional investments needed to support the strained IT capacity, to be used for computational science purchases to enhance the collection and use of big data. Sustained and predictable funding growth for VA research is imperative to help ensure the best return on investment in improving the health of veterans and all Americans.

PHYSICAL AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) INFRASTRUCTURE

State-of-the-art research requires an investment in state-of-the-art facilities, technology, and equipment. For decades, appropriations for construction, maintenance, and IT have not provided the resources VA needs to replace, maintain, or upgrade its aging research and IT infrastructure to support the research program. For FY 2022, FOVA recommends the following funding to support physical and IT research infrastructure:

MAJOR AND MINOR CONSTRUCTION - At least $100 million

A 2012 congressionally mandated report found a clear need for systematic infrastructure improvements for VA research laboratories. VA completed a Phase II assessment in 2020 of fewer than one-third of sites inspected in Phase I. Phase II findings show that while certain projects have received funding, significant deficiencies remain. Over $200 million was estimated to correct all deficiencies identified in the Phase II report, including $99.5 million in Priority 1 deficiencies, representing immediate needs such as life safety hazard corrections. FOVA believes designating funds specifically for research facilities is the only way to make significant improvements. For capital infrastructure, renovations, and maintenance, FOVA recommends at least $100 million for VA research facilities to address the most pressing repairs.

OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY - $42 million

VA's Office of Information and Technology (OIT) is responsible for IT development and maintenance for programs including clinical, health management, benefits, security, and research. To advance and modernize the VA research program, OIT funding must be designated specifically for research use on a yearly basis. For FY 2022, FOVA recommends $42 million of the OIT budget to be assigned for VA research to support the purchase and maintenance of IT infrastructure, increase data storage and access capabilities, increase data security, increase interoperability with affiliated partners, and transition to more robust and functional cloud computing platforms.

FOVA was founded over 30 years ago to ensure that America's veterans receive high-quality health care. Today, FOVA is a diverse coalition representing nearly 100 national academic, medical, and scientific societies; voluntary health and patient advocacy groups; and veteran-focused associations. FOVA works in concert with the *Independent Budget* veterans service organizations.

Organizations Endorsing the FOVA FY 2020 Recommendation <mark>(## as of DATE)</mark>