

New \$5 million Lupus Medical Research Program Approved by House Subcommittee

Lupus Advocates Successfully Enlist Congressional Support

New York, NY. May 13. A new \$5 million Lupus Peer-reviewed Medical Research Program to be operated by the U.S. Defense Department has been approved by the House of Representatives Defense Appropriations Subcommittee as part of its 2017 Defense Appropriations spending bill approved by the subcommittee May 11. The bill is scheduled to be voted on by the full Appropriations Committee on May 17.

The creation of the program was a top priority for the Congressional Lupus Caucus and its leadership, and was vigorously supported by an aggressive outreach and advocacy campaign by the Alliance for Lupus Research (ALR), S.L.E. Lupus Foundation, Lupus Research Institute (LRI) and the LRI National Coalition of state and local organizations, the “patients’ voice for lupus research.”

Under the leadership of Caucus Co-chairs Representatives Tom Rooney (R-FL), William Keating (D-MA), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) the Lupus Caucus led the effort in the House to create the new research program this year.

Congressional Support for the Lupus Community

ALR Chairman and NY Jets owner Woody Johnson expressed deep appreciation for the Caucus and subcommittee action on behalf of America’s lupus community. “We thank Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) and Vice-Chair Kay Granger (R-TX) for championing the establishment of this critically important Lupus Medical Research Program. We commend the entire Committee for recognizing the need for additional peer-reviewed lupus research that will help lead to better understanding of the mechanisms of this devastating chronic disease and new treatment options.”

“Lupus affects millions, including many active duty military, dependents and retired veterans, commented **Richard DeScherer, S.L.E. Lupus Foundation President**. “We applaud the continued leadership of the Congressional Lupus Caucus in supporting the advancement of lupus research and increased awareness of the often misdiagnosed disease among the general public and health professionals. We are also very proud that the hard work and persistence of advocates across the country succeeded in winning Congressional support.”

The subcommittee bill with the new research provision must next be endorsed by the full Appropriations Committee May 17 and then approved by a vote on the House floor, likely before the end of June. Later this year, the House and Senate versions of the bill will be merged into a final conference bill for final approval by Congress.

Urgent Need for Military Women

Nine out of ten people with lupus are women and the risk is significantly greater among African-Americans, Hispanics, Native-Americans and Asians. Defense Department data show that women now make up a much greater share of our armed forces than they have at any time in U.S. history. Women account for almost 15 percent of active duty Service Members, almost 20 percent of Reserves and 15.5 percent of the National Guard. A recent Pew Research Center report found that the active-duty female

force is racially diverse –nearly one-third (31%) of active-duty women are black (including black Hispanics). Twelve percent of women in the Armed Forces report their ethnicity as Hispanic, whether white or black. Our nation now has over 2 million women veterans, about 9 percent of the total veteran population, and expected to rise to 15 percent by 2035.

About Lupus

Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes inflammation and tissue damage to any organ system in the body. The health effects of lupus include heart attacks, strokes, seizures, organ failure, and possible death.

About the Alliance for Lupus Research

The Alliance for Lupus Research (ALR) is a national voluntary health organization dedicated to finding better treatments and ultimately preventing and curing systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE, or lupus). The organization is based in New York City and chaired by Robert Wood Johnson IV. Since its founding in 1999, the ALR has given more money to lupus research than any non-governmental agency in the world. To date the ALR has committed over \$105 million to fund the most innovative and aggressive research into the cause, prevention and cure of lupus. The board of directors funds all administrative and fundraising costs, allowing one hundred percent of all donations from the public, and the proceeds of our signature grassroots fundraising program, Walk with Us to Cure Lupus, to go directly to support research programs. More information can be found at lupusresearch.org.

About S.L.E. Lupus Foundation and Lupus Research Institute

Formed 45 years ago, the S.L.E. Lupus Foundation is dedicated to advancing lupus research, patient education, advocacy and awareness. In 2000 the Foundation helped launch the Lupus Research Institute to support only bold novel research in lupus – the creativity and innovation needed to drive scientific discovery in this complex autoimmune disease. Together the organizations have generated over \$200-million for cutting edge lupus research, delivering many of the most pivotal scientific breakthroughs of the past decade. Today the LRI is the world’s leading private supporter of innovative research in lupus. Learn more at LupusNY.org and LupusResearchInstitute.org.

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