

**FY19 Signers (95):** Ryan Costello, Tony Cárdenas, Glenn GT Thompson, Daniel T. Kildee, Alan Lowenthal, Jimmy Panetta, John Yarmuth, Barbara Comstock, Donald M. Payne Jr., Mike Thompson, Ann McLane Kuster, Mike Doyle, Salud O. Carbajal, Anna G. Eshoo, Elizabeth H. Esty, Ruben Kihuen, A. Donald McEachin, Brian K. Fitzpatrick, Stacey E. Plaskett, Julia Brownley, Peter T. King, Sean Patrick Maloney, Cedric L. Richmond, Lois Frankel, Charlie Crist, Dwight Evans, Jamie Raskin, Earl Blumenauer, Joe Kennedy, Lisa Blunt Rochester, Filemon Vela, Bruce Poliquin, James P. McGovern, Brenda L. Lawrence, Ro Khanna, Ruben Gallego, Sander M. Levin, Marc Veasey, Raul Ruiz, MD, Dave Loebsack, Beto O'Rourke, Carol Shea-Porter, Seth Moulton, Juan Vargas, John B. Larson, John K. Delaney, Ron Kind, Mike Kelly, Anthony G. Brown, Niki Tsongas, Mark Takano, Kyrsten Sinema, Kathleen M. Rice, Jared Polis, Raúl M. Grijalva, Kathy Castor, Yvette D. Clarke, Sheila Jackson Lee, James R. Langevin, Bobby L. Rush, G.K. Butterfield, Collin C. Peterson, David E. Price, Ben Ray Luján, Rick Larsen, David Cicilline, Peter A. DeFazio, Barbara Lee, André Carson, Stephen F. Lynch, Eleanor Holmes Norton, Peter Welch, Danny K. Davis, Patrick Meehan, Chellie Pingree, Lloyd Doggett, Doris Matsui, Steve Chabot, Tim Walz, Adam Schiff, Linda T. Sánchez, Christopher H. Smith, Emanuel Cleaver, II, Steve Cohen, Daniel W. Lipinski, C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, Joe Courtney, Wm. Lacy Clay, William R. Keating, Ted Deutch, Leonard Lance, Brian Higgins, Alcee L. Hastings, Paul D. Tonko, and Jan Schakowsky.

Dear Colleague,

Please join us in requesting funding of the Multiple Sclerosis Research Program (MSRP) at the Department of Defense by signing on to our bipartisan letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. A funding request of \$16 million for this program would allow the department to more adequately address this condition that affects nearly one million Americans.

New prevalence data shows that nearly 70,000 American veterans live with MS. An advisory committee commissioned by the VA has recommended further study into the potential link between combat service and increases risk of developing MS and Congress must ensure that this research can be funded. Only 30%-40% of veterans receive obtain their care from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) but the VHA provides care for 20,000 veterans with MS annually. Of those veterans that do receive care at the VHA, over half have a service connected disability for MS. Answering basic biological gaps and fundamental questions about MS has the potential to significantly improve readiness for our armed service members as well as improving outcome and care for all of those living with MS.

It is imperative that we support our veterans and all those Americans living with MS. To sign on to this letter, [please fill out this form](#) by **COB March 26<sup>th</sup>**. If you have any questions, please reach out to Meghann Galloway in the office of Rep. Cárdenas ([Meghann.galloway@mail.house.gov](mailto:Meghann.galloway@mail.house.gov)) or Joseph Knowles in the office of Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick ([joseph.knowles@mail.house.gov](mailto:joseph.knowles@mail.house.gov)).

Sincerely,

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

The Honorable Pete Visclosky  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Defense  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2205 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Calvert:

**A landmark new study by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (Society) recently confirmed that nearly one million Americans live with multiple sclerosis (MS).**<sup>1</sup> On behalf of those living with MS, we would like to thank you for your past support funding MS research through the Multiple Sclerosis Research Program (MSRP) at the Department of Defense. Based on this new prevalence data, we urge that Congress provide at least \$16 million for the MSRP in fiscal year (FY) 2020 to help drive the development of new solutions for people with MS and target a cure for this disease.

MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system that disrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body. Symptoms range from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis, but the progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted. Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50, during the prime of an individual's life, with at least two to three times more women than men being diagnosed with the disease. There currently is no cure, but investment in research will drive solutions that will bring us closer to a world free of MS.

The new prevalence information indicates that nearly 70,000 American veterans live with MS. An advisory committee commissioned by the VA has recommended further study into the potential link between combat service and increases risk of developing MS and Congress must ensure that this research can be funded. Only 30%-40% of veterans receive obtain their care from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); however, the VHA provides care for 20,000 veterans with MS annually. Of those veterans that do receive care at the VHA, over half have a service connected disability for MS. Answering basic biological gaps and fundamental questions about MS has the potential to significantly improve readiness for our armed service members as well as improving outcome and care for all of those living with MS.

The high risk, high reward nature of research funded by the MSRP can transform general knowledge and understanding of MS, improve diagnosis and care, and help find a cure.

This knowledge can improve the readiness of our active duty service members and help guide treatment of veterans and the American public. To meet these goals, we ask that you provide \$16 million for the MSRP in the FY2020 Defense Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Mitchell T. Wallin, William J. Culpepper, Jonathan D. Campbell, Lorene M. Nelson, Annette Langer-Gould, Ruth Ann Marrie, Gary R. Cutter, Wendy E. Kaye, Laurie Wagner, Helen Tremlett, Stephen L. Buka, Piyameth Dilokthornsakul, Barbara Topol, Lie H. Chen, Nicholas G. LaRocca. The prevalence of MS in the United States. *Neurology* Feb 2019, 10.1212/WNL.0000000000007035; DOI: 10.1212/WNL.0000000000007035