



November 17, 2017

## 41 Additional Groups Oppose Defunding of VA Dog Studies

Today a coalition of 41 scientific and medical organizations and research universities [sent a letter](#) to Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) and Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS), chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, stating opposition to efforts by Rep. Dave Brat (R-VA), Brian Mast (R-FL) and Dina Titus (D-NV) to defund research involving canines at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). [H.R.3197](#), titled the “PUPPERS Act,” and [an amendment](#) to the House-passed homeland security minibus would effectively end studies with canines at the VA. To read the letter to the Hill signed by 41 organizations, [click here](#).

Last week, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) [also sent a letter](#) to the chair and vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, opposing efforts to defund research with dogs at the VA, citing that the “action would eliminate important research that will benefit the veteran community.” FASEB’s letter is available [for viewing here](#).

If you have not yet written to Congress about your concerns, [please take a moment to speak up](#) by sending a pre-written, editable message to your Representatives and Senators to ask them to oppose H.R. 3197 and Rep. Brat’s amendment. Please also encourage your friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors to make their voices heard, too. [Sending the pre-written letter](#) is quick, easy, and private, and most importantly should go a long way in protecting these important programs for our nation’s veterans.

**WRITE TO CONGRESS**

## Personhood for Elephants: Real Issue or Panem et Circenses?

The Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) has filed a lawsuit [seeking legal personhood](#) for three elephants in a Connecticut zoo. Does this latest “personhood for animals” lawsuit have any legal basis, or is it just to appease animal rights activists? So far, this case appears similar to earlier court cases seeking legal personhood for chimps: a waste of the court’s time. NhRP’s president, Steven Wise, claims that elephants’ cognitive abilities and self-awareness should qualify them for personhood, and thus they should be granted certain legal rights. If this sounds familiar, it’s because NhRP has already issued habeas corpus petitions for chimps in several cases brought forth in New York. NhRP lost each time, but plans to appeal.

NhRP has yet to show any new legal argument in the elephant case. Therefore, even though it would be tried in Connecticut instead of New York, a different outcome is unlikely. There is no legal precedent for courts granting habeas corpus to animals in the United States and it’s unclear just how far-reaching the impact of granting personhood to animals could be. An Argentinian court in 2016 granted a writ of habeas corpus to a chimpanzee. NhRP clarifies it is seeking a common law writ of habeas corpus, not the full spectrum of human rights for these elephants. The group aims to have the elephants released to a sanctuary. Because the petition was just filed this week, it could be quite some time before it reaches a courtroom or a decision is

granted. To read coverage in *The Washington Post*, [click here](#).

## **‘Raise the Caps’ Campaign Calls for Increased Science Funding**

This week, Research!America [launched a campaign](#) urging Congress to support a bipartisan budget deal that lifts spending caps and provides flexibility for increased federal funding for science. The campaign, called [“Raise the Caps.”](#) has been visible on Twitter and Facebook this week. Digital and print advertisements have also been placed throughout the week in *The Wall Street Journal*, *POLITICO*, *Washington Examiner*, *Weekly Standard*, *The Hill*, *CQ Roll Call*, [washingtonexaminer.com](#), [weeklystandard.com](#), and *Daily Caller*.

[NABR signed a letter](#) sent by science organizations earlier this week to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI), and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) urging Congress “to forge a bipartisan agreement that raises the Defense and non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) budget caps and provides meaningful funding increases for our nation’s science agencies.”

As Mary Woolley, president of Research!America [wrote in a press release](#) about the campaign: “When science is short-changed it has ripple effects on every aspects of our lives, from health, to food, energy, and technology, and the list goes on. The scientific community has come together to speak out against arbitrary budget caps that jeopardize our nation’s health, safety, and global competitiveness.”

[Click here for more information](#) about the Raise the Caps campaign. We encourage you to join the conversation on social media using the hashtag #RaiseTheCaps.

## **Register for the International BDS Conference!**

The 5th International Basel Declaration Society (BDS) Conference titled [“Openness and Transparency: Building Trust in Animal Research”](#) will occur February 14-15, 2018 in San Francisco, CA. The conference will provide a unique opportunity for stakeholders to discuss ways to improve open communication and enhance public trust in animal research. [The program](#) will include several sessions and workshops including, “The Importance of Nonhuman Primates in Neuroscience Research: Scientific and Ethical Issues,” “NIH – Supported Extramural Research and Transparency,” “How Greater Openness with the Public Can Ease Pressures on the Animal Research Supply Chain,” “Round Table Discussion on Animal Research, Openness and Transparency,” and much more. [Click here to view the full program](#).

[Registration for the conference is free and on a first come, first serve basis.](#)

The deadline to register is January 1.