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STATEMENT

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FBR MOURNS THE DEATH OF DR. MICHAEL E. DEBAKEY

It is with great sadness and a profound sense of loss that the Foundation for Biomedical Research mourns the passing of our long-time chairman, Dr. Michael E. DeBakey. For almost a quarter century, Dr. DeBakey has served as chairman and leader of FBR.

Dr. DeBakey's professional accomplishments were extraordinary and well-documented. His contributions are too many to list in this space but his surgical innovations, from the first successful by-pass to the Dacron aortic graft to the left ventricular assist device to his development of MASH units, the health care system for veterans' hospitals and the National Library of Medicine are indicative of his intellectual acumen, his creativity and his deep sense of purpose. What is perhaps less well known was his deep and abiding support for humane and responsible animal research to advance human health and his selfless commitment of his time and energy to help the public better understand this emotional and sometimes contentious issue.

During his tenure as FBR chairman, Dr. DeBakey met with editorial boards, reporters and law-makers to explain that without the animal model, his work in cardiovascular medicine would have been severely hampered. He never flinched from the controversy and he often stepped in when others in our community would not. He represented all of us well and far beyond what many readers may appreciate. It was because of him that some very onerous legislation never passed and that major news publications wrote balanced stories. He was perhaps the last household name in medicine, and when he entered a press room or Capitol Hill, he was treated like a rock star. This great respect with which he was accorded gave great credibility and gravitas to the issue of animal research and each and every biomedical researcher in this country has suffered a tremendous loss with the passing of a man, a giant who embodied the best that the medical profession and medical research has to offer.

In April of this year, Congress bestowed upon Dr. DeBakey the Congressional Medal of Honor. Dr. DeBakey was 99 and had received many, many honors in his lifetime, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the National Medal of Science, but the Congressional honor, with its freshly minted gold medal depicting both Dr. DeBakey's image and an anatomically correct human heart seemed to be the recognition he cherished above all the others. It could not

have been more deserved or come at a more opportune time. There will never be another like him and all of us at the Foundation are so much better for having known him.

Established in 1981, FBR is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to the public understanding, respect and support for the humane and responsible use of animals in medical and scientific research. For more information visit www.fbresearch.org.

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