



NATIONAL
ALLIANCE
for EYE and
VISION
RESEARCH

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Allergan, Inc
American Academy
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American Academy
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American Optometric
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Novartis
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Vistakon, Johnson & Johnson
Vision Care, Inc.

**Eye and Vision Breakthroughs:
Keep the Research Drive Alive!**

September 22, 2006

The Honorable Joe Barton, Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Barton:

On behalf of the 55 professional, consumer and industry organizations representing the community of support for eye and vision research conducted by the National Eye Institute (NEI), the National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research (NAEVR) endorses the *National Institutes of Health (NIH) Reform Act of 2006*, as reported out of Committee.

NAEVR commends you for your commitment to a strong and vibrant national biomedical research enterprise, as well as your leadership in working on a bipartisan basis. As an organization that met frequently with committee staff to identify issues of concern, we appreciate the responsiveness of Katherine Martin and especially Cheryl Jaeger in ensuring that the legislation is aligned with the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) NIH reform recommendations.

We applaud your commitment to working with Congress to ensure NIH funding increases, and our community will fully support your efforts in that regard in both the House and Senate.

We eagerly anticipate the new opportunities for the NEI presented by the common fund. As you know, NEI's trans-Institute research efforts have resulted in numerous breakthroughs cited by NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni, including the recent discovery of gene variants associated with age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of blindness in the United States. This research brings hope to all Americans, especially the 38 million citizens age 40 and older who experience blindness, low vision, or age-related eye disease such as AMD, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy or cataracts.

Congratulations on bringing a bipartisan reform bill to the House floor, and we look forward to supporting a strong and adequately funded NIH for the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Stephen J. Ryan, M.D.
President, NAEVR Board of Directors

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and Colleges of Optometry
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American Uveitis Society
AMD Alliance International
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Immunology Group
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Research To Prevent Blindness
Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation
Tear Film and Ocular Surface Society
The Cornea Society
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The Macula Society
The Retina Society
Vision Share,
The Consortium of Eye Banks
Women in Ophthalmology
Women's Eye Health Task Force