



NAEVR

National Alliance For
Eye And Vision Research

Serving as Friends of the National Eye Institute

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**NAEVR URGES THAT FY2011 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS
MAINTAIN THE “PEER REVIEWED MEDICAL RESEARCH-VISION”
EXTRAMURAL RESEARCH LINE ITEM AND FUND IT AT \$10 MILLION**

The Peer Reviewed Medical Research-Vision (PRMR-Vision) line item in defense appropriations is a dedicated funding source for extramural vision research into immediate battlefield needs which is not conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or the National Eye Institute (NEI) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). NAEVR urges Congress to fund PRMR-Vision at a level of \$10 million in FY2011. It warrants a continued, rigorous investment, especially since Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has identified research into **Restoration of Sight and Eye-Care** as one of the four top priorities for defense funding, with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Prosthetics.

- Ground soldiers face numerous assaults that potentially impair visual function, including:
 - Traumatic eye injury from penetrating eye injuries and visual disorders associated with TBI account, which account for 16 percent of injuries in soldiers wounded/evaluated in Iraq and Afghanistan—trailing only hearing loss as the most common injury—with upwards of 85 percent of all TBI-patients experiencing visual dysfunction;
 - Eye injuries from chemical, biohazard and laser exposure; and
 - Corneal (front-of-eye) and retinal (back-of-eye) injuries that are often not evaluated until a soldier’s vital signs are first assessed and which, if not stabilized, lead to vision loss.
- In FY 2009, Congress moved vision research out of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) and made it a separate line item, Peer Reviewed Medical Research-Vision, which was funded at \$4 million. In FY2010 appropriations, however, Congress cut PRMR-Vision funding to \$3.75 million.
- PRMR-Vision is being managed by the DOD’s Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center (TATRC), which will make FY2009 awards in first-quarter 2010 that address immediate battlefield needs, such as: treatments to slow/stop vision loss; treatments for blast and burn injury; methods to test visual dysfunction, especially in TBI-related injury; and models to better understand the extent of blast injuries to the eye.
- Vision research awards previously funded through CDMRP have addressed basic, clinical, and translational research, such as: corneal (healing, protection for burn patients, improved transplantation); retinal (treatment of laser-induced injuries; retinal neuro-protective factors through non-invasive ocular drug delivery, and retinal implants); battlefield repair of penetrating eye injuries; and eyelid muscle replacement.

Vision, the sense most critical for optimal military performance in battlefield and support positions, is most vulnerable to acute and chronic injury. Treatment of acute eye injury determines the extent of vision impairment or resulting chronic eye disease and the associated need for vision rehabilitation. Research to effectively treat acute eye damage can have long-term implications for an individual’s vision health, productivity, and quality of life for the remainder of their military service and into their civilian lives.