



**NAEVR**

National Alliance For  
Eye And Vision Research

*Serving as Friends of the National Eye Institute*

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## **Suggested House Report Language for FY2012 LHHS Appropriations National Eye Institute (NEI) Funding in the National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

### **Mission**

NEI conducts and supports basic and clinical research, research training, and other programs with respect to blinding eye diseases, visual disorders, mechanisms of visual function, preservation of sight, and the special health problems and needs of individuals who are visually-impaired or blind. In addition, NEI is responsible for the dissemination of information, specifically public and professional education programs aimed at the prevention of blindness.

NEI's leadership is vital, as Congress has designated 2010-2020 as The Decade of Vision, in which the majority of the 78 million Americans of the baby boom generation will turn 65 and be at greatest risk for eye disease.

### **Translational Research**

The Committee recognizes NEI's translational research initiatives through partnerships with other NIH Institutes and Centers, other agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and with private funding organizations. The Committee acknowledges NEI's leadership of the human gene therapy clinical trial for neurodegenerative eye disease Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA), in which follow-up has indicated that the treatment is safe and produces lasting visual improvement, and is pleased that NEI is expanding the trial to younger patients with less severe disease to minimize vision loss.

### **Genetic Basis of Eye Disease**

The Committee commends NEI's leadership in elucidating the genetic basis of devastating eye diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), retinitis pigmentosa (RP), and glaucoma. The Committee is pleased that, building upon the first successful use of Genome Wide Association Studies (GWAS) to determine the increased risk of developing AMD from gene variants, NEI has created a new International AMD Genetics Consortium to bring together researchers from five continents to share and analyze GWAS results to further determine the genetic basis of the disease.

### **Diabetic Eye Disease**

The Committee acknowledges the NEI Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Research (DRCR) Network's results that laser treatment for diabetic macular edema, when combined with anti-angiogenic drug treatment, is more effective than laser treatment alone, and how this will revolutionize the standard of care that has been in place for the past 25 years. With the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) leading a new NIH strategic plan to combat diabetes, NEI's research through its various diabetic eye disease networks over the past 40 years—with which it has partnered with NIDDK—will be more important than ever,

### **Comparative Effectiveness**

The Committee commends NEI's leadership in conducting the Comparison of AMD Treatments Trial, a comparative effectiveness trial of the two leading anti-angiogenic drug therapies currently used to treat the "wet" form of AMD. The Committee awaits the initial results of this study and how they will drive further research into this leading aging eye disease. The Committee joins Dr. Collins in recognizing that, based on NEI's research, 1.3 million Americans at risk for severe vision loss from AMD over the next five years can receive potentially sight-saving therapies.