

FY2008 Defense Appropriations Include Vision Research Eligibility, Potential TBI Funding

The FY2008 Defense appropriations bill signed by the President on November 13 (Public Law 110-116) continues eye and vision research's eligibility for funding within the Department of Defense's (DOD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP). Eye and vision research is one of 21 fields of research that can compete for funds within the CDMRP's Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP), which was funded at \$50 million.

"This is the third year that eye and vision research has been listed, which reflects both the applicability and importance of defense-related vision research," said NAEVR's James Jorkasky, who noted that 16 percent of all Iraq war injuries affect the eye, with optic nerve trauma the most severe. In its first year of listing (FY2006), the vision research community submitted 52 of the 651 total grant requests, or eight percent, and received five of the 48 awards, or ten percent, representing \$4.8

million. Although eye and vision research was listed in FY2007, PRMRP funding was not included in the year-long Joint Funding Resolution due to jurisdictional issues, which have subsequently been resolved.

The bill also contained the *Wounded Warriors Act's* \$70 million funding for a variety of research and rehabilitation programs, including research on visually-related neurological conditions associated with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). NAEVR will track the stream through which these funds may be available, as well as those in the CDMRP/PRMRP programs, and report to the networks.

On November 7, prior to final passage, NAEVR commended the House and Senate Defense conferees for the inclusion of vision research and sent a letter of appreciation to House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Ranking Member C.W. "Bill" Young (R-FL) and

to Members who submitted letters of support, including Cong. James Walsh (R-NY), Cong. Pete Sessions (R-TX), and Cong. John Boozman (R-AR).



H.R. 3558 sponsor Cong. John Boozman (R-AR) and NAEVR's James Jorkasky



Stan Poel, Director of the VA's Blind Rehabilitation Service, and James Orcutt, M.D., Ph.D., the VA's National Director of Ophthalmology

Vision Community Supports Military Eye Trauma Treatment Act

On October 29, under the auspices of the Congressional Vision Caucus, NAEVR network members American Academy of Ophthalmology, American Optometric Association, Blinded Veterans Association, and Prevent Blindness America joined NAEVR in supporting a Congressional briefing entitled *Through the Eyes of a Soldier*. The briefing, featuring representatives of the DOD and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), was held to educate staff about the extent of eye injuries in Iraq and

Afghanistan and to summarize provisions in the *Military Eye Trauma Treatment Act* (H.R. 3558/S. 1999) that would improve coordination of care between the DOD and VA. The legislation would create a *Military Eye Injury Registry* to track the diagnosis and treatment of combat-related injuries, as well as create a joint DOD/VA program to coordinate on all aspects of visual dysfunction related to TBI, including screening, diagnosis, rehabilitative management, and research.



Blinded Veterans Association's Tom Zampieri testified in support of H.R. 3558 at an October 4 hearing of the Health Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, in which he cited NAEVR's examples of key defense-related vision research. Mr. Zampieri has also been quoted in October 4 and November 14 front-page *USA Today* stories on the extent of eye injuries in the current conflicts.