

President's Message

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 omnibus spending bill nets the National Eye Institute (NEI) \$16 million more than FY2004—a 2.5 percent increase compared to the 2 percent increase for the NIH, overall. In personal letters, I have commended the Congressional leaders for the increase in eye and vision research funding, as they had a tight fiscal environment and a host of competing priorities with which to deal in this session.

When the 109th Congress convenes in early January 2005, it will have new faces, several new committee chairs and even greater fiscal pressures, all of which present significant challenges for medical research advocacy in the FY2006 budget and appropriations process. We will understand the full extent of these challenges when the President's budget issues in February. In the interim, NAEVR will continue to build upon the

base of expanded Hill, coalition partner and media outreach it began in 2004—per the Strategic Plan and as featured in this report.

Among the more than 200 contacts with Hill offices this past year were those with potential Senate and House Appropriations Committee chairs in the 109th Congress (both Senator Stevens and Cong. Young have reached term limits as chairs). The AEVR-sponsored briefings on *The Aging Eye* and *Vision Health Disparities Research* reiterated the importance of eye disease as a major public health problem for all Americans and paved the way for follow-up to secure Member support. Dozens of vision researcher visits on Capitol Hill facilitated by NAEVR added an even more personal and compelling component to our message of the value of eye and vision research.

That message will be strengthened further on January 25, 2005, as NAEVR officially releases on

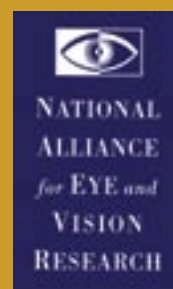
Capitol Hill the new *Vision and Blindness* fact sheet developed with Research!America and The Lasker Foundation. I am delighted that NAEVR will have such a significant presence so early in the session, especially alongside two such prestigious advocates for medical research. It is a portent of even greater things to come from NAEVR and AEVR!

One last reminder—if you are represented by new Members of Congress, please make sure to contact them and ask that they make federal funding for eye and vision research a priority. NAEVR Executive Director Jim Jorkasky can assist you in that regard.

I wish to thank all contributors for their support in 2004, and look forward to working with you in 2005. If you have any comments, feel free to email me at sryan@doheny.org.



Dr. Ryan with Blake Thompson and Jillian James, staff of Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), Senate Appropriations Committee chair in the 109th Congress



"Vision researcher visits on Capitol Hill added an even more personal and compelling component to our message."