

## ARVO Members Key to Capitol Hill Advocacy

As Congress considered FY2005 budget and appropriations issues, members of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) were effective advocates for eye and vision research funding on Capitol Hill and in Congressional districts.

On July 14, Dr. Neil Bressler (Wilmer Eye Institute/Johns Hopkins) met with key Members of the Maryland delegation and Appropriations leaders, sharing the new NAEVR-developed *Age-related Eye Disease* fact sheet (available at [www.eyersearch.org](http://www.eyersearch.org)). While advocating for additional NEI funding, Dr. Bressler tailored his message to the concerns of each

office, for example: Senator Sarbanes (D-MD)—children’s vision, as his health legislative assistant is a pediatrician; Senator Mikulski (D-MD)—an Appropriator and women’s/aging health advocate; Cong. Cummings (D-MD)—vision health disparities, as he chairs the Congressional Black Caucus;

“A strong medical research infrastructure can expand disease prevention activities and remediate Medicare costs.” —Cong. Mark Foley (R-FL)

Cong. Hoyer (D-MD)—an Appropriator and aging advocate; and Senator Stevens (R-AK), 108th Congress Senate Appropriations Committee chair—Native American health issues advocate.



Left to right: Dr. Bressler meets with Liz Connell and Rachael Dallin of Senator Ted Stevens’ (R-AK) office. Ms. Dallin’s brother is sight-impaired due to retinitis pigmentosa.

On September 8, ARVO member Dr. Alan Marmorstein (University of Arizona) hosted Sami Hamed from the office of Cong. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) for a briefing on the NEI-sponsored Early Treatment of Retinopathy of Prematurity (ETROP) study, presented by study chair Dr. William Good (Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute). Mr. Hamed is sight-impaired due to ROP.

Also on September 8, after Dr. Rohit Varma and Dr. Mildred Olivier spoke at the *Vision Health Disparities Research* Briefing, they met with key Appropriations staff just as the Senate LHHS Subcommittee markup was being finalized—which was approved the next day and recommended higher funding for NIH overall, and NEI, specifically, than the House bill.



Left to right: Dr. Rohit Varma and Dr. Mildred Olivier meet with Brent Jaquet of the office of Cong. Bill Young (R-FL), 108th Congress House Appropriations Committee chair

On October 24, at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in New Orleans, the NAEVR Board hosted a dinner with Cong. Mark Foley (R-FL), a member of the Ways and Means Committee and Deputy Majority Whip, whose district represents the fifth largest Medicare-eligible population in the United States. Dr. Jean Jacob (Louisiana State University) described to Cong. Foley the importance of NEI funding to the achievements and goals of the vision research program at LSU. While meeting with the NAEVR Board the next day, Cong. Foley stated that, “a strong medical research infrastructure can expand disease prevention activities and remediate Medicare costs.”



Cong. Mark Foley (R-FL) hears about vision research at LSU from researcher Dr. Jean Jacob