



### President's Message

## FY2009 Increase of \$230 Million in NIH and Defense Funding for Vision Underscores Research Quality, Public Health Need, and the Impact of NAEVR Advocacy

Based on preliminary Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 data from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for "regular" and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)-related appropriations, as well as 2009 extramural research awards announced by the Department of Defense (DOD), funding for vision research increased by an unprecedented \$230 million!

The accompanying chart reveals that, in addition to the FY2009 Congressional appropriations to the National Eye Institute (NEI) of \$196 million ("regular" and ARRA), vision researchers successfully

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competed for another \$34 million in funding. At NIH, this included competing successfully within the common fund (e.g., Bridge Awards), the Office of the Director (OD) at NIH (e.g., ARRA-related Challenge Grants), and within other NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs). At DOD, this meant competing in FY2008 against 21 other areas of disease research within the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP)—before vision was given its own dedicated line item in subsequent appropriations.

I believe that this success is attributable to three factors. Vision researchers submit high quality proposals that address scientific need. Often, it is collaborative research that relates to other diseases, so it stands out within the NIH common fund and at other ICs. Vision research meets a very real public health need, especially with 78 million Baby Boomers turning age 65 and the visual implications of the epidemic of diabetes.

In passing resolutions earlier this year—H. Res. 366 and S. Res. 209—Congress not only recognized NEI's pivotal role during its 40th anniversary year, but designated 2010-2020 as the *Decade of Vision* to

acknowledge the daunting public health challenge of vision loss. At DOD, vision research is addressing the reality of battlefield conditions, such as corneal healing, corneal and retinal protection, and visual dysfunction from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

NAEVR advocacy and AEVR education have been key to this success. NAEVR was among the first to urge then-President Obama and Congress to support ARRA. Again, NAEVR was among the first to share examples of ARRA-funded research during the October 30 Association for

Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) Advocacy Day, supplementing participants' own stories about the scientific and economic impact of their research. All the while AEVR, through its *Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Initiative*, has sustained Capitol Hill awareness through its briefings, two of which are detailed herein. The \$230 million increase reflects an almost 500-fold return on the vision community's investment in the Alliances in 2009.

Unfortunately, as new NIH Director Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D. has noted, sustained NIH funding for FY2011 will be a challenge, especially with expiration of the two-year stimulus. As the ARVO researchers recently heard first-hand, many Congressional offices are unwilling to discuss FY2011 NIH funding until they have a better sense of return on the stimulus investment. That means that NAEVR needs to be ever-vigilant in making the case for the value of vision research and, in that regard, will need the vision community's full financial support in 2010.

In closing, I want to thank NEI Director Paul Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., Extramural

### Contributor Report

FY 2009 Vision Research Funding Increase of \$230 Million	
"Regular" NEI Appropriation	\$ 21.4 M
NIH Common Fund (e.g., Bridge Awards)	5.6 M
ARRA NEI Appropriation	175.0 M
ARRA NIH OD, Common Fund, Other ICs	16.0 M
2009 Awards/FY2008 Defense Vision	12.0 M
	<b>\$ 230.0 M</b>

Director Loré Anne McNicol, Ph.D., and the entire NEI staff for their herculean efforts in committing the appropriated funds in such a timely fashion. I also want to acknowledge former NEI Deputy Director Ed McManus who, along with former NEI Director Carl Kupfer, M.D., have released their book *History of the National Eye Institute 1968-2000*. As much as we are looking ahead with the recent infusion of unprecedented funding for the NEI, it is also useful to look back and remember the rich history of the Institute, especially as it concludes the year-long celebration of its 40th anniversary.



Dr. Stephen Ryan (left) and NAEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky (right) with Ed McManus, who served for more than 25 years as the NEI Deputy Director and previously as the Alliances' Executive Director. Mr. McManus co-authored the recently released *History of the NEI 1968-2000* with former NEI Director Carl Kupfer, M.D.

Have a happy and healthy holiday season. Thanks for your support in 2009, and I look forward to working with you in 2010.

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