

Vision Community Unites on Capitol Hill to Recognize *World Sight Day 2009*

AEVR joined fellow vision groups in co-sponsoring a first-ever *World Sight Day (WSD)* Congressional Briefing, presented by *Vision 2020/USA*, a program of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). Held the second Thursday of each October, *WSD* focuses global attention on blindness and vision impairment. Louis Pizzarello, M.D., M.P.H. (Columbia University), who serves as Chairman of *Vision 2020/USA* and the immediate-past IAPB Secretary General, welcomed attendees and noted that 314 million people around the world are visually impaired, with 45 million of them blind. He added that blindness/vision impairment is the sixth leading cause of disabilities in the United States, 80 percent of vision loss is preventable, and that blindness prevention and treatment has an unparalleled economic payoff. He also highlighted the inordinate burden of blindness in developing countries, where vision-related problems account for 25 percent of all visits to clinics.

WSD 2009, which was recognized in a statement by NEI Director Dr. Paul Sieving, had a theme of *Gender Equity in Eye Care and Blindness Prevention*, which

was addressed by Janine Austin Clayton, M.D., Deputy Director of the Office of Research on Women's Health in the Office of the NIH Director. A board-certified ophthalmologist who has served as an attending physician and clinical investigator in cornea and uveitis at the NEI since 1996, Dr. Clayton emphasized that women experience an excess burden of visual impairment worldwide due to sex and gender effects on ocular disease, aging, health states and diseases unique to women, and socioeconomic issues, especially access to eye care. She reported that nearly two-thirds of blind individuals worldwide are women and girls, in many countries men have twice the access to eye care as women, and equal access to eye care could substantially reduce blindness in poor countries.

Dr. Clayton was joined by Jennifer Klein, a Senior Advisor on Global Women's Issues in the Office of Global Women's Issues in the Department of State, who described current efforts by the Obama Administration. Two Members of Congress—Cong. Tim Bishop (D-NY) and Cong. Gene Green (D-TX)—welcomed attendees and stressed the importance of blindness prevention.



Left to right: AEVR's James Jorkasky with moderator Louis Pizzarello, M.D., M.P.H. (Columbia University) and speaker Janine Austin Clayton, M.D. (NIH/Office of Research on Women's Health)



Cong. Tim Bishop (D-NY) spoke about the event sponsors' dedication to blindness prevention



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Vision 2020/USA unites 36 organizations dedicated to preventing blindness and assisting those with vision loss and has representation from every state and the District of Columbia. AEVR was pleased to join other vision organizations co-sponsoring this event, which included:

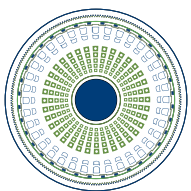
American Optometric Association
ARVO
Dana Center for Preventive Ophthalmology-Johns Hopkins
Eye Bank Association of America
Helen Keller International
International Eye Foundation
Lighthouse International
Optometry Giving Sight
Prevent Blindness America
Seva Foundation
Vision Spring
Women's Eye Health.org



James Jorkasky with Cong. Gene Green (D-TX), co-chair of the Congressional Vision Caucus



Left to right: Mark Ackermann and Cynthia Stuen, Ph.D., (Lighthouse International) joined Cathy Cohen (American Academy of Ophthalmology) in discussions



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