

## President's Message

I am writing to you just after completing the testimony I will present on April 21 during the House LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee's "Citizen Witness" hearing (see story inside). I am honored that NAEVR and ARVO (by President Dr. Gary Abrams) have been invited to present on behalf of the eye and vision research community and will be joined by other prestigious patient advocacy groups and coalition partners. I commend the work of our Legislative Counsel John Porter and our Executive Director Jim Jorkasky in ensuring that key Committee leaders are fully apprised of NAEVR's message about the value of federally funded eye and vision research being conducted at the National Eye Institute (NEI).

## NAEVR can make a strong case that eye and vision research should be a "top priority" among the many priorities Congress faces

In February, I joined John and Jim in strategy meetings. John advised that the NEI-derived eye disease incidence and economic cost data and the compelling examples of NEI's basic and clinical research (such as the identification of a gene strongly associated with age-related macular degeneration) enable NAEVR to make a strong case for eye and vision research being a "top priority" among the many priorities Congress faces. Therefore, the NEI should be funded at \$711 million in FY2006, or a 6 percent increase over FY2005. This is a leading state-

ment in written testimony NAEVR submitted on March 9 to the House LHHS Subcommittee, and in my planned April 21 testimony. NAEVR will also make this point in written testimony submitted to the April 6 Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee hearing.

Regarding that Subcommittee, I commend its chair Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) who once again demonstrated his support for medical research through an amendment to increase the FY2006 NIH budget by \$1.5 billion over that proposed in the President's Budget, to \$30 billion. On March 17, both the amendment and the overall Senate Budget Resolution passed and now must be reconciled in conference with the House Budget Resolution, which maintains the President's pro-

posed FY2006 NIH increase of \$200 million. NAEVR has strongly urged Congress to fund the NIH at \$30 billion in FY2006 and has commended NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni for his cost-effective use of research dollars. Our community will be able to demonstrate its support for increased NIH and NEI funding when Dr. Zerhouni speaks at the ARVO Annual Meeting on May 1.

We are still in the early stages of the budget and appropriations process, and much can still happen. We will continue to make our case, as shown



Dr. Ryan

by this report's examples of outreach with Capitol Hill and coalition partners. I appreciate your commitment to NAEVR and ask that you enhance our efforts by contacting your Members of Congress and supporting NAEVR's request for FY2006 NIH and NEI funding at \$30 billion and \$711 million, respectively.

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