



Contributor Report

President's Message

In Midst of Budget/Spending Battles, Vision Research Message Resonates Widely

Although Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 began on October 1, Congress has yet to finalize any spending bills, other than Defense. It returns December 3 for a planned two-week session in an attempt to finalize FY2008 appropriations bills, either through an omnibus measure or year-long funding resolution. The current budget/spending battle, in which Congress plans to spend \$22 billion more than the President's budget proposal—much of it on domestic programs, such as medical research—is fraught with several good news/bad news stories for our community.

See Special Insert: NAEVR Releases *Silver Book: Vision Loss*

For the first time in five years, Congress passed a Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) appropriations conference bill with increased National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding that would match inflation. In that regard, the research value message is being heard. However, Congress could not override the President's veto of the bill—based purely on politics, we are told, and not on a lack of appreciation for the NIH's breakthrough research. As a result, the conference bill's increase in NEI funding of \$17 million will likely not occur, and NAEVR and its networks must work diligently to ensure even half that amount.

On a positive note, the Defense spending bill retained eye and vision research's eligibility for funding. The bill also includes additional funding for

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)-related research, including that into visually-related neurological conditions. NAEVR will fully inform all networks of the funding opportunities these initiatives present, which could be substantial and build upon the \$4.8 million received by defense-related vision researchers in calendar year 2007 from FY2006 funding.

As noted in the stories contained within, throughout this complex legislative process the vision research message has been shared widely and in various

contexts—ranging from Hill briefings on rare eye diseases, combat-related eye injuries, and release of the *Silver Book: Vision Loss* on aging eye disease, to NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni acknowledging in multiple public venues NEI Director Dr. Paul Sieving's leadership with respect to the genetic basis of eye disease and research into blood vessel inhibition in the eye. Dr. Sieving's "plain English" explanation of the genetic basis of eye disease at the recent Congressional briefing on *Rare Eye Diseases* not only resulted in multiple requests from staff to view vision research on-NIH campus and at extramural Institutions, but drew him praise from staffers for his simple-yet-dramatic examples of the value of research funding.

NAEVR Executive Director Jim Jorkasky and Legislative Counsel John



Dr. Ryan (right) and Tom Harkin (D-IA)



Dr. Ryan and Philip Moore

Dr. Ryan's recent visits included thanking Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee Chair Tom Harkin (D-IA) for his and Ranking Member Sen. Arlen Specter's (R-PA) leadership for an inflationary increase for the NIH. Dr. Ryan also met with Philip Moore in the office of Cong. John Boozman (R-AR) to support the *Military Eye Trauma Treatment Act* (see story inside).

Porter will not only continue to work for every possible dollar available for vision research in FY2008, they are already developing new strategies for the FY2009 legislative process. I look forward to working with them in that regard, as well as to report to you on their accomplishments for our community.

As always, thank you for your support and commitment.

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National Alliance For
Eye And Vision Research

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