

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is our first-ever formal NAEVR/AEVR Report, and its contents represent the spirit of collaboration and communication within the eye and vision community, built around our common goal of increased funding for the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The leadership provided by the Board and new Executive Director James Jorkasky, the legislative counsel of Richard Salem, and the dedication of so many NAEVR member advocates to visit and email Congress resulted in an appropriated \$657.2 million for the NEI in Fiscal Year (FY) 2004, a \$24 million or 3.8% increase over FY2003, as well as a \$1 billion appropriated increase for the NIH. NEI's amount reflects the full, higher Senate bill number (rather than the House bill's \$648 million). The NEI and the National Cancer Institute were the only two Institutes not to have the Senate number reduced in conference. Our united and sustained efforts

resulted in more than 1,700 email letters to Congress and 150 visits to Capitol Hill offices, including those of key appropriators. NAEVR was one of the few groups to continue its advocacy up to the time of the January 22, 2004, Senate vote on the HR2673 Conference Report. Although there were many contentious portions of this omnibus bill, NAEVR members sent more than 600 email letters the week of January 20, reminding Senators that vital NEI and NIH funding increases must pass. And, on January 23, several members of ARVO, an AEVR/NAEVR founding organization, were among the first to thank Senate offices for their support.

On January 15, I had the opportunity to visit six key House and Senate offices, including those of Senators Feinstein and Boxer of my home state of California. As I listened to staff speak about the anticipated conclusion of the FY2004 appropriations process—

and the potentially greater budget challenges expected in the FY2005 process—I realized that I was hearing primarily from the offices of our existing supporters. Although it was important to “check in” with these offices and secure their continued support, I concluded that we must continue to build our base of “Champions” for eye and vision research. Jim and Richard will be devoting their efforts to this. I will be counting on each of you to develop relationships with your Members of Congress (especially through Capitol Hill meetings or hosting Members in your district). Please remember to inform Jim Jorkasky of your contacts, as he is developing an updated and expanded database.

Thank you for your commitment to NAEVR and AEVR. If you have any comments, feel free to email me at [sryan@usc.edu](mailto:sryan@usc.edu).



NATIONAL  
ALLIANCE  
*for EYE and*  
VISION  
RESEARCH



ALLIANCE  
FOR EYE  
AND VISION  
RESEARCH



NAEVR/AEVR Boards President  
Stephen J. Ryan MD