

# Contributor Report

## Health/Education Community Urges Congress to Increase the FY2007 Budget

More so than in any recent year, the health and education advocacy community, including NAEVR, began activities early in the budget process in an attempt to increase funding in the FY2007 Budget Resolutions passed by the Senate and House. The President's FY2007 budget proposal would flat-fund NIH at the FY2006 level of \$28.5 billion and reduce NEI funding by 0.8 percent, or \$5.3 million. Individual Institute funding is being cut from 0.6 to 0.8 percent to underwrite expanded bio-defense research.

	FY2005 ACTUAL	FY2006 ACTUAL	FY2007 PROPOSED
NEI	\$669.1 M +2.5%	\$666.8 M -0.3%	\$661.5 M -0.8%
NIH	\$28.6 B +2%	\$28.5 B -0.2%	\$28.5 B 0%

The community rallied to support an amendment sponsored by Sens. Specter (R-PA) and Harkin (D-IA) to add \$7 billion to the FY2007 Senate Budget Resolution for health and education programs, which would add \$1 billion to the NIH budget, restoring it to the FY2005 funding level. On March 16, the amendment passed 73-27, and the Senate Budget Resolution passed 51-49. NAEVR networks sent thousands of letters of support for the amendment and followed up with hundreds of "Thank You" and "I Am Disappointed" letters to their Senators. NAEVR wrote to Senate leaders thanking

them for their support, as well as to the 27 Republicans who voted for the amendment. Later in the month, Dr. Ryan made visits to the offices of Sens. Specter and Harkin to express the vision community's appreciation.

The community maintained its momentum by contacting House Budget Committee members and urging them to adopt the Specter/Harkin amendment, as introduced on March 29 in Committee by Cong. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT). As expected, the amendment was voted down along party lines. In the interim, 23 moderate Republicans, led by Cong. Fred Upton (R-MI) and Cong. Nancy Johnson (R-CT) sent a letter to House Speaker Hastert (R-IL) requesting that discretionary funding in the House Budget Resolution be increased by two percent. Concurrently, moderate House Republican Cong. Mike Castle (R-DE) vowed to champion the Specter/Harkin amendment

Concurrently, the conservative Republican Study Committee also rallied against the House Budget Resolution (as a means by which to support reforms in the budget process), as did appropriators over limitations in disaster relief aid. As a result, House Majority Leader Cong. Boehner (R-OH) could not secure passage of a House Budget Resolution prior to the start of the Easter recess on April 7, requiring ongoing negotiations in advance of anticipated House floor action the week of April 24. If a House Budget Resolution is not passed, the House can "deem" an overall budget number within other legislation and defer to the leadership and Appropriations "Cardinals" (the chairs of the House Appropriations Subcommittees) to determine the allocations for each of appropriations bills that must be passed.

Ultimately, the Senate and House LHHS Appropriations bills emerging from the

***If the budget has to pass with all Republican votes, I don't think it can pass at the President's number.*** —*Cong. Nancy Johnson (R-CT)*

on the House floor and attempted to consolidate all moderate Republican support into that effort.

On April 5, NAEVR sent letters to the offices of 49 moderate Republicans (primarily members of the Republican Main Street Partnership) urging them to support the House Budget Resolution only if it included the additional \$7 billion for health and education programs. This was complemented by email letters sent from NAEVR network members, as well as direct requests from participants in the April 6 American Academy of Ophthalmology Advocacy Day.

Appropriations Subcommittees must be reconciled through the conference process. With the election this Fall, NIH-watchers are predicting that an LHHS appropriations bill may not be finalized until well after the FY2007 fiscal year begins on October 1, with some even predicting a year-long Continuing Resolution. NAEVR and its networks will be engaged every step of the way (see accompanying Appropriations story), and updates will appear at [www.eyersearch.org](http://www.eyersearch.org)