

Legislative Scorecard ISSUES

Advocacy Community Urges NIH Increase as House and Senate Pass FY2009 Budget Resolutions and Begin Appropriations Hearings

Budget Resolution

On March 13, the House passed its version of the \$3 trillion Budget Resolution, as did the Senate after rejecting an attempt to impose a year-long moratorium on earmarks. Earlier the Senate approved by a vote of 95-4 Amendment 4203, sponsored by Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and co-sponsored by 29 bipartisan Members, which would add \$2.1 billion for NIH funding in FY2009 for a total increase of \$3 billion or 10.3 percent over the FY2008 appropriation. The overwhelming level of support for this non-binding amendment—which serves as a guideline for spending bills developed later—represented the advocacy by NAEVR and its coalition partners.

House Appropriations Hearings

On March 5, NIH Director Elias Zerhouni was among four Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) agency heads who testified in a hearing entitled *Health Issues and Opportunities*. Dr. Zerhouni highlighted several NEI initiatives, including the *Comparison of AMD Treatments Trial* (CATT), a comparative effectiveness study of the two drugs used to block growth of abnormal blood vessel growth in patients with

the “wet” form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) that could guide treatment patterns and reduce costs to the Medicare program.

The Subcommittee held a Citizen Witness hearing, and although the vision community was not selected to testify as in 2007, NEI’s AMD research was lauded in testimony by Robert Palazzo, Ph.D., President of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). NAEVR submitted written testimony that highlighted NEI’s recently released research results and its extensive collaborations within NIH, with other DHHS agencies, and with private funding organizations.

Senate Actions

On March 12, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on the recently released report *A Broken Pipeline? Flat Funding of the NIH Puts a Generation of Science at Risk*, which was sponsored by seven academic research institutions.

On April 23, the Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee plans a hearing with Dr. Zerhouni and several Institute Directors.

Research!America Forum On Future of Healthcare

On March 18, Research!America held a national forum entitled *Valuing Evidence and Enhancing Impact* which challenged speakers to identify fundamental changes that must be made now to impact healthcare 30-years out.



Left to right: Andrew von Eschenbach, M.D. (Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration), Elias Zerhouni, M.D. (Director, NIH), Garry Neil, M.D. (Corporate Vice President, Johnson & Johnson), Susan Dentzer (“The News Hour with Jim Lehrer”), Joel Kupersmith, M.D. (Chief R&D Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs), Carolyn Clancy (Director, Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research), William Novelli (CEO, AARP), and Julie Gerberding, M.D. (Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Full details about these events appear in the NAEVR Web site Advocacy Center’s section on NIH/NEI Appropriations

	FY 2007 Final	FY 2008 Final	FY 2009 Budget	NAEVR Request
NIH*	\$28.9 B	\$28.9 B +.46%	\$28.9 B 0%	\$31.2 B + 6.6%
	\$667.1 M	\$667.1 M 0%	\$677.8 M + 0.1%	\$711 M +6.6%

* For FY 2009 NIH budget, equates to \$29.2 billion program levels with HIV/Global AIDS



In his supporting statement for Senate Amendment 4203, Sen. Specter (R-PA) detailed lost opportunities at NIH due to flat funding, including NEI’s ability to fund epidemiological studies in minority populations



In addition to lauding NEI research in his March 13 testimony, FASEB President Robert Palazzo, Ph.D., emphasized that flat NIH funding threatens an entire generation of young researchers, as well as new therapies



On March 31, NIH held the first official meeting of its Council of Councils, which was mandated by the *NIH Reform Act of 2006* to advise NIH on its common fund for trans-Institute research. National Advisory Eye Council representative to the Council, Lenworth Johnson, M.D. (University of Missouri-Columbia), joins Dr. Zerhouni, who has described the common fund as a primary route through which basic and applied science can converge to meet research goals.