



President's Message

Congressional Resolutions Affirm NEI's Leadership of Nation's Vision Research Commitment

Last edition, I reported on the significant NAEVR presence on Capitol Hill that facilitated more than \$200 million in funding for vision researchers from the National Eye Institute (NEI)—\$174 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding from the \$10.4 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and \$21.4 million in increased Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 appropriations—and the Department of Defense (DOD). Regarding the latter, the DOD so values vision research that it has added \$1.2 million to the \$4 million Congressional appropriation to fund its FY2009 Vision Research Program, an announcement for which recently issued. NAEVR is using that fact to support its FY2010 request for \$10 million for this dedicated line item in defense appropriations.

In this edition, NAEVR reports on its activities to increase vision research funding, as well as Capitol Hill efforts to acknowledge the NEI's 40th anniversary and garner support for the designation of 2010-2020 as the *Decade of Vision*. The NEI began its celebration in early April—upon the 40th anniversary of the first meeting of the National Advisory Eye Council (NAEC)—with a series of campus-based events highlighting its leadership in basic, translational, and trans-Institute collaborative research. I was fortunate to have been a speaker for the excellent April *Genetics and Genomics* Symposium. NEI's commitment to the genetic basis of eye disease not only facilitates prediction, preemption, and treatment, but keeps it within the focus of NIH Director-designate Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D., former director of the Human Genome Project. Dr. Collins and NEI Director Paul Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., have collaborated closely in the past, and we look forward to Dr. Collins' confirmation. We thank Acting NIH Director Raynard Kington, M.D., Ph.D., for his dedicated service.

I was in Washington, D.C., for AEVR's June 17 reception celebrating the NEI's 40th anniversary on Capitol Hill, which drew more than 200 attendees. Just the previous day, the House unanimously passed H. Res. 366 acknowledging the NEI's 40th anniversary and designating the *Decade of Vision*. Lead Republican co-sponsor Cong. Pete Sessions (R-TX) and co-sponsor Gene Green (D-TX), who co-chairs the Congressional Vision Caucus, attended the reception and made compelling comments, much as they did the previous day (with lead Democratic sponsor Cong. Tammy Baldwin, D-WI) on the House floor, which have been documented in the *Congressional Record*.

The resources put into the successful passage of these Congressional resolutions will have long-term benefits, as they have detailed the value of vision research—past, present, and into the future.

After reading the statements, I have never felt prouder of the NEI's accomplishments, and I encourage you to download the document from NAEVR's Web site. On July 7, the Senate passed its companion resolution, S. Res. 209, and we also thank lead Republican sponsor Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and lead Democratic co-sponsor Ben Cardin (D-MD) for their efforts.

Alliance members should realize how difficult it is in the current Congress to not only get resolutions passed in both chambers, especially the Senate, but to get them acted upon in such a short timeframe and in a strong bipartisan manner. I am proud of NAEVR/AEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky and NAEVR Advocacy Manager David Epstein for their success in this regard, which testifies to their strong working relationships with Members from both sides of the aisle. I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), the Association for Research in Vision and

Contributor Report



At AEVR's June 17 Capitol Hill reception, Cong. Pete Sessions (R-TX, center), the lead Republican co-sponsor of H. Res. 366 (along with lead Democratic sponsor Cong. Tammy Baldwin, D-WI), joined NEI Director Paul Sieving, M.D., Ph.D. (left) and AEVR President Dr. Stephen Ryan (right)

Ophthalmology (ARVO), and Prevent Blindness America (PBA) for their assistance with key Members, as well as all of the NAEVR network members

who urged their Representatives to sign onto H. Res. 366 as co-sponsors.

The resources put into the successful passage of these Congressional resolutions will have long-term benefits, as they have detailed the value of vision research—past, present, and into the future. As Congress considers future NIH funding vis-à-vis ARRA and past appropriations, it is hungry for examples of how medical research investment is saving and improving lives. At this strategic time, NAEVR has provided cogent examples of how the vision research investment can reduce healthcare costs, increase productivity, and improve the quality of life.

I want to thank all 2009 NAEVR/AEVR contributors. As you can see, the Alliances are strong and productive and continue to be among the most effective in advocating and educating about the value of research.

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