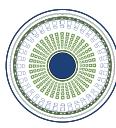


H. Res. 366 Passes as Vision Community Recognizes NEI 40th Anniversary on Capitol Hill



DECADE OF VISION 2010-2020

an initiative of the
Alliance For Eye And Vision Research

On June 17, AEVR hosted a Capitol Hill reception recognizing the NEI's 40th anniversary, which brought together more than 200 attendees representing Members of Congress and their staffs, the vision community, and coalition partners. The event came one day after passage of H. Res. 366 (see previous page). Future AEVR educational events will be held under the *DOV* banner, which represents a sustained program to educate about the value of federally funded vision research.

While speakers acknowledged the rich history associated with the founding of the NEI, they also focused on current research to save and restore vision and its global impact. AEVR Board President Dr. Stephen Ryan recognized the important role of vision community organizations Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB) and the Lions Clubs in advocating for the creation of a free-standing eye institute separate from the then-National Institute for Neurological Diseases and Blindness. These efforts, which began in the mid-1960s, culminated in passage of the NEI Act that was signed into law by President Johnson in 1968. The

These recent events underscore the importance that Congress places on the NEI as the nation's lead Institute within the NIH to prevent blindness and save and restore vision. James Jorkasky

NEI held the first meeting of its National Advisory Eye Council (NAEC) in April 1969. Dr. Ryan announced that the 122nd meeting of the NAEC would be held the next day and that several NAEC members were present that evening. RPB and Lions Clubs were just two of the 18 vision community organizations that submitted congratulatory letters to the NEI, which were displayed at the event.

Dr. Ryan acknowledged the leadership of NEI's first director, Carl Kupfer, M.D., who served for more than 30 years, and

Edward McManus, who served for more than 25 years as NEI Deputy Director and subsequently as AEVR Executive Director. Dr. Ryan recognized current NEI Director Dr. Paul Sieving's commitment to NEI's leadership in basic, clinical, and epidemiological research and as a proactive collaborator with other NIH Institutes and private funding foundations. In his comments, Dr. Sieving emphasized NEI's leadership in the study of the genetic basis of eye disease, highlighting the measurable vision improvement within the initial safety trials of a human gene therapy trial that NEI has funded with the Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB) on Leber Congenital Amaurosis (LCA), a rapid retinal degeneration that blinds infants in their first year of life.

Lions Clubs International President Al Brandel, a retired police detective from Long Island who has served as a Lion for 35 years, concluded the program by emphasizing the global impact of NEI's research. Lions Clubs International programs have helped to preserve vision in more than 40 million individuals. "We were there for the

creation of the NEI, and we will continue our partnership with the NEI in the future to save and restore vision worldwide," he said.

Commenting on the passage of H. Res. 366 and the reception, AEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky stated that, "These recent events underscore the importance that Congress places on the NEI as the nation's lead Institute within the NIH to prevent blindness and save and restore vision, benefiting the health, and vision health, of all Americans."



Cong. Gene Green (D-TX, left), an H. Res. 366 co-sponsor and co-Chair of the Congressional Vision Caucus, who provided a welcome, with AEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky



Original lead H. Res. 366 co-sponsor Cong. Pete Sessions (R-TX) (left) welcomed fellow co-sponsor Cong. Howard Coble (R-NC) to the reception



Cong. Doug Lamborn (R-CO), an H. Res. 366 co-sponsor, with NAEVR Advocacy Manager David Epstein



Dr. Sieving highlighted NEI's current research efforts



Lion Clubs International President Al Brandel spoke about NEI's global impact. Lions Clubs, in conjunction with Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB), coordinated the 100,000 telegrams and letters to Congress in 1968 to support the creation of a free-standing eye institute within the NIH



Elizabeth Lee (office of Cong. Tammy Baldwin, D-WI, H. Res. 366 lead Democratic sponsor) with Allie Laban-Baker (AMD Alliance International) and Joanne Angle (ARVO)



Dr. Ryan and James Jorkasky with Edward McManus (center), who served for more than 25 years as NEI Deputy Director and previously as AEVR Executive Director



Cynthia Stuen, Ph.D. (Lighthouse International) and Michael Duenas, O.D. (American Optometric Association)



Left to right: NAEC Members Chris McGahan, Ph.D. (North Carolina State University) and Richard Stone, M.D. (University of Pennsylvania)



Left to right: NAEC Members Scott Cousins, M.D. (Duke University Eye Center) and Charles Gilbert, M.D., Ph.D. (Rockefeller University) with Dr. Sieving



NAEC Member James Chodosh, M.D. with ARVO's Bobbie Ann Austin, Ph.D.