



President's Message

\$200 Million Increase for Vision Research Is 400-Fold Return on NAEVR/AEVR Investment

Between the economic stimulus and Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 appropriations, vision researchers will have access to at least an additional \$200 million in funding from the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the Department of Defense (DOD). That is a 400-fold return on the vision community's investment in NAEVR/AEVR, a remarkable return in today's market. I commend NAEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky and his team of Advocacy Manager David Epstein and Legislative Counsel John Porter, as well as the NAEVR network members, who have advocated tirelessly for these funding increases with Congress and the new Obama Administration.

NAEVR was one of the first advocacy organizations to request \$10 billion in NIH funding within economic stimulus legislation.

NAEVR had a constant presence and leadership position on Capitol Hill this first quarter of 2009 through vision advocacy and educational events.

While the economic downturn has been devastating for the private sector, that is, less funds for vision research from philanthropic organizations and industry, the federal government has made more funds available for vision research than ever.

Armed with data from Research!America about the \$8.6 billion loss in National Institutes of Health (NIH) purchasing power over the past six funding cycles and November 2008 testimony by Acting NIH Director Raynard Kington, M.D., Ph.D., about the stimulative nature of NIH grants locally and nationwide, NAEVR was one of the first advocacy organizations to request \$10 billion in NIH funding within economic stimulus legislation.

Of course, there were other propitious factors. Our Senate champions, especially Senate Labor, Health and Human Services,

and Education (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittee Ranking Member Arlen Specter (R-PA), supported by Chair Tom Harkin (D-IA), led the charge for this unprecedented request, and NAEVR committed to support these leaders who have done so much for NIH funding. Additionally, the incoming Obama Administration had signaled its support for increased science funding, and NAEVR urged the transition team to support the \$10 billion NIH funding as a first step in the doubling of the NIH budget over the next ten years.

I was fortunate to have been in

Washington, D.C. on February 11 to receive the Visionary Award from the Foundation Fighting Blindness at its annual Valentine's Day Gala. Although I was humbled by FFB's honor, I mention it solely to tell you about the energy I felt surrounding political change, especially that of policymakers toward funding science and research. Emcee Cokie Roberts emphasized the renewed importance of advocacy, observing that our community has a strong message about the value of vision research, especially its power to save and restore vision to ensure productive, independent, and quality lives.

I agree with Ms. Roberts. That is why I am so pleased that NAEVR has launched its efforts to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the NEI in 2009 and the *Decade of Vision 2010-2020* initiative to maintain a sustained awareness of the value of federally funded vision research that benefits all Americans. As this edition goes to press, NAEVR is engaged with its Congressional champions to offer both House and Senate

Contributor Report



Dr. Ryan offers comments at the February 11 Foundation Fighting Blindness Valentine's Day Gala, where he received the Visionary Award

resolutions acknowledging the anniversary and designating 2010-2020 as *The Decade of Vision*. NAEVR will sustain that awareness through a June 11 Capitol Hill reception. NAEVR's events will complement and expand upon those planned by the NEI,

including its NIH campus event being held on April 3, the very day 40 years ago that the

first meeting of the National Advisory Eye Council (NAEC) was held. NAEVR is ensuring that Congressional authorizers and appropriators with oversight of NIH are aware of these events.

I know these are very challenging economic times for our economy, and no one is immune from the downturn. That is why I want to offer a special thanks to all organizations which have contributed to NAEVR/AEVR in 2009. As you can see, the Alliances are strong and productive. Despite their small size relative to other organizations, NAEVR/AEVR are among the most effective in advocating and educating about the value of research. That fact is reinforced by the 400-fold return on investment!

Stephen J. Ryan, M.D.
President, NAEVR/AEVR Boards
sryan@doheny.org

National Alliance For
Eye And Vision Research
Alliance For Eye
And Vision Research