Since FY2001, the Department of Defense (DOD) has funded more than $100 million in vision research. Since it was created by Congress in FY2009 appropriations through NAEVR advocacy, the Vision Research Program (VRP) within the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) has awarded 71 grants totaling $56 million. The DOD reports that research projects it has funded in the first two VRP funding cycles (2009-2010 and 2011-2012) have resulted in 80 published papers that are advancing knowledge about the diagnosis and treatment of eye trauma injuries.

Since NEI’s FY2013 and FY2014 operational net funding levels were down $45 million and $27 million, respectively, from the pre-sequester FY2012 level of $702 million, the $34 million funding stream in the FY2013/2014 CDMRP/VRP funding cycle has been instrumental in balancing those NEI budget decreases.

FY2015/2016: VRP Program Announcement Released

On October 13, the FY2015/2016 VRP Program Announcement was released after originally being expected in the late Spring/early Summer timeframe. This year’s program cycle combines Congressional appropriations from FY2015 and 2016 (when those are finalized)—which are expected to total $20 million—and as in previous years is likely to be supplemented by funding from the DOD’s Psychological Health/Traumatic Brain Injury (PH/TBI) program to support projects that focus on visual dysfunction related to TBI. This year’s program offers two separate funding mechanisms:

- A Technology/Therapeutic Development Award (TTDA), which is expected to fund four awards for a total of $6 million, and
- A Clinical Trial Award (CTA), which is expected to fund four awards for a total of $12 million.

To apply for funding for the current program, a Letter of Intent must be submitted by December 2, and a full application is due December 16. Projects funded with FY2015 dollars must be negotiated by September 30, 2016, and projects funded with FY2016 dollars must be negotiated by September 30, 2017.

FY2013/2014: DOD’s CDMRP Announces $34.1 Million in Awards

For FY2014, the CDMRP awarded a total of $18.1 million in eye and vision research awards through four different research programs, including the VRP. This comes on top of the $16 million that eye and vision researchers received in FY2013 through three DOD research programs.

Planning for 2017 VRP Funding

Although Congress has not yet finalized FY2016 defense appropriations, NAEVR has begun planning for its FY2017 VRP funding request, and will join with advocacy partners Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), ARVO, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Optometric Association, and Foundation Fighting Blindness in developing a strategy that requests $15 million, based on the advice of House Appropriations Committee Chair Hal Rogers (R-KY), who informed BVA of his support for that level. NAEVR will again approach the office of Cong. Tim Walz (D-MN), the highest ranking enlisted man to serve in Congress, to submit the formal request letter to the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee for VRP funding.

NAEVR to Sponsor Veterans Groups’ FY2017 Request to Congress

As it has in previous years, NAEVR will be a sponsor of the Independent Budget, an annual set of recommendations to Congress regarding Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and DOD funding, which is developed by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and supported by 50-plus Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and Military Service Organizations (MSOs), including NAEVR. The Independent Budget will include the vision community’s FY2017 VRP funding request, as well as that for increased funding for services for blinded and visually-disabled veterans. NAEVR’s engagement in this process, coupled with its being invited to “sit at the table” with VSOs and MSOs in meetings with the House Democratic leadership, reflects an awareness of the importance of military eye trauma.

NAEVR’s David Epstein is a regular participant in quarterly meetings of VSOs and MSOs with the House Democratic leadership, which includes (center to right) Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Cong. Tim Walz (D-MN)

If you are interested in DOD-funded research, ensure to email NAEVR’s David Epstein at depstein@eyeresearch.org to be added to NAEVR’s “DOD Interest List” to receive notices of:

- Program Announcements for various DOD-funded programs
- CDMRP/VRP awards and links to accompanying abstracts that could be helpful in preparing your own grant submission
- NAEVR’s Defense Vision Funding Opportunities Session at ARVO’s annual meeting (to be held Monday, May 2, at ARVO 2016 in Seattle, Washington)

NAEVR to Sponsor Veterans Groups’ FY2017 Request to Congress

As it has in previous years, NAEVR will be a sponsor of the Independent Budget, an annual set of recommendations to Congress regarding Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and DOD funding, which is developed by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars and supported by 50-plus Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and Military Service Organizations (MSOs), including NAEVR. The Independent Budget will include the vision community’s FY2017 VRP funding request, as well as that for increased funding for services for blinded and visually-disabled veterans. NAEVR’s engagement in this process, coupled with its being invited to “sit at the table” with VSOs and MSOs in meetings with the House Democratic leadership, reflects an awareness of the importance of military eye trauma.

NAEVR’s David Epstein is a regular participant in quarterly meetings of VSOs and MSOs with the House Democratic leadership, which includes (center to right) Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Cong. Tim Walz (D-MN)

If you are interested in DOD-funded research, ensure to email NAEVR’s David Epstein at depstein@eyeresearch.org to be added to NAEVR’s “DOD Interest List” to receive notices of:

- Program Announcements for various DOD-funded programs
- CDMRP/VRP awards and links to accompanying abstracts that could be helpful in preparing your own grant submission
- NAEVR’s Defense Vision Funding Opportunities Session at ARVO’s annual meeting (to be held Monday, May 2, at ARVO 2016 in Seattle, Washington)

Visit the Defense-related Vision Research section of NAEVR’s Web site for more details

Executive Director
James F. Jorkasky
240-221-2905 | jamesj@eyeresearch.org
Director, Government Relations and Education
David H. Epstein
240-221-2902 | depstein@eyeresearch.org
1801 Rockville Pike, Suite 400
Rockville, Maryland 20852-1606
www.eyeresearch.org