For the third year, RPB provided a grant to support the EVS events. This year, RPB Director of Communications Diana Friedman attended the events and accompanied Rose Pasquale in New York delegation visits. Ms. Friedman offered the following thoughts on her participation:

“I was pleased to spend time with the EVSs throughout the two days. They did a wonderful job of conveying their passion and expertise, which is what makes science engaging and accessible to lay people. For legislative staff and Members of Congress, getting the chance to interact with young researchers brings NIH and NEI budget discussions to life. Suddenly, these are not just numbers on a page; they represent a chance for new careers, a strong STEM pipeline, healthcare cost-savings, and of course, life- and vision-saving treatments.”

The 18 EVSs conducted 44 Capitol Hill visits, including four with Members of Congress who wanted to hear directly about their concerns as young investigators. In their meetings, the advocates thanked Congress for the $2 billion NIH increases in each FY2016 and 2017 and urged enactment of a bipartisan budget agreement that raises the non-defense discretionary spending caps to enable the $2 billion FY2018 NIH increase—to a level of $36.1 billion for the NIH and $759 million for the NEI—as approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Although NAEVR’s James Jorkasky and David Epstein and ARVO’s Matt Windsor, PhD accompanied many visits to obtain images, the EVSs did the talking!

**EVS Impressions/Development**

The EVS program is an important part of an early-stage investigator’s development, as noted by participants:

“The EVS program was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. While many of my research studies were funded by government, the visits and discussions with decision-makers made me feel for the first time a real connection between my research and the actions of Congress.” —Dr. Zhuang

“Thank you for allowing me to participate—it was truly one of the most rewarding professional activities I have ever had the pleasure in which to engage. It was extremely interesting to peek behind the curtain regarding policy matters on Capitol Hill.” —Dr. Rogala

“Thank you for choosing me to represent young vision scientists across the U.S. There is a lot behind the policy and funding decisions that affect us that we simply do not learn in our training. I have encouraged a couple of my colleagues to apply for the program next year.” —Dr. Kaleem

**NAEVR Sponsors Rally for Medical Research Advocacy Day**

For the fifth year, NAEVR has served as a sponsor for the Rally for Medical Research Advocacy Day, and the Rally has recognized AEVR’s International AMD Awareness Week Congressional Briefing as an official event. This year’s Rally Advocacy Day—held concurrently with NAEVR’s EVS Advocacy Day—engaged 350 advocates from 37 states in more than 250 Congressional meetings.

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“I was pleased to spend time with the EVSs throughout the two days. They did a wonderful job of conveying their passion and expertise, which is what makes science engaging and accessible to lay people. For legislative staff and Members of Congress, getting the chance to interact with young researchers brings NIH and NEI budget discussions to life. Suddenly, these are not just numbers on a page; they represent a chance for new careers, a strong STEM pipeline, healthcare cost-savings, and of course, life- and vision-saving treatments.”