NAEVIR’s EVS Advocacy Day

On a very busy and historic day on Capitol Hill that included a Senate Judiciary Committee Meeting about Supreme Court Nominee Brett Kavanaugh, the 20 EVSs conducted 36 Congressional office visits, including three with Members of Congress who wanted to hear directly about their concerns as early-stage investigators.

In their meetings, the advocates thanked Congress for the final FY2019 NIH/NEI appropriations and emphasized the need for continued robust increases as they proceed with their vision science careers. In House visits, the EVSs requested that the Member become a co-sponsor of H.R. 6421, the Faster Cures and Treatments for Eye Diseases Act, that would authorize and implement the Eye Bond program of up to $1 billion in private vision research funding.

Many of the EVSs shared a one-page graphic of their research and emerging therapies/technologies, emphasizing the potential benefit and return on the federal investment. Per NAEVR’s training, the EVSs also offered to serve as a reference on vision issues and invited the Member and staff to visit their Department or School/College.

For the fourth year, RPB provided a grant to support the EVS events. This year, RPB President Dr. Brian Hofland accompanied Drs. Giles Hamilton-Fletcher and Rachel Wozniak in New York delegation visits, commenting:

“This was the fourth year that RPB sponsored the EVS Day. It was wonderful that FY2019 NIH and NEI appropriations already were finalized, enabling participants to present their breakthrough research and describe plans to submit their first Investigator-Initiated (RO1) grant within that positive context. This year, instead of focusing on how delayed appropriations would have negative impacts on their career plans, the EVSs emphasized how their research has the potential both to improve quality of life and reduce healthcare costs. Congressional staff were especially receptive to this messaging about the value of the nation’s investment in vision research.”

EVS Impressions/Development

The Alliances designed this program to be an important component of an EVS’s professional development, as well as to populate the next generation of vision research advocates. Comments from this year’s participants include:

“I appreciate having been included in the 2018 EVS events. I learned much more about the political system and now understand how significant it is to participate in the process.”

Dr. Haworth

“I want to thank AEVR/NAEVR for organizing this event and giving a unique opportunity. Our Ohio Senate delegation visits went very well, with staff asking many questions and willing to look into the numbers that we presented. Of course, Dr. Ehlers and I offered to host the Member/staffer in a tour of the Cole Eye Institute at Cleveland Clinic.”

Dr. Sawant

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From left: Jillian Pearring, PhD and Mia Woodward, MD (University of Michigan/Kellogg Eye Center), Devin Parsons, office of Senator Gary Peters (D-MI), Josh Ehrlich, MD, MPH (University of Michigan/Kellogg Eye Center), and Andrew Garrett, PhD (Wayne St. University)

2 Cong. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), a retiring co-Chair of the Congressional Vision Caucus, with Alfonso Sabater, MD, PhD (University of Miami/ Bascom Palmer)

3 From left: Onkar Sawant, PhD (Cleveland Clinic/Cole Eye Institute), Jenny Huang, OD, PhD (Ohio State College of Optometry), Alyssa Brockington, office of Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Justis Ehlers, MD (Cleveland Clinic/Cole Eye Institute)

4 Congressman William Keating (D-MA) with Kevin Houston, OD (Harvard University/Mass Eye & Ear)

5 Kathryn Irwin, office of Senator Kamela Harris (D-CA), with Tawna Roberts, OD, PhD (Akron Children’s Hospital, soon to join Stanford University Department of Ophthalmology)

6 Rachel Pearce, office of Cong. Don Bacon (R-NE), with Matthew Van Hook, PhD (University of Nebraska)

Sponsor RBP Comments

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