This edition of the Report details the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) spending bills proposed by the House and Senate. Due to strong bipartisan support, each bill includes National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Eye Institute (NEI) funding increases for the fourth fiscal year—with the Senate bill providing larger increases due to a higher overall spending allocation. With a growing portion of any NIH increase going to special initiatives, including those specified in the 21st Century Cures Act such as the BRAIN Initiative, Cancer Moonshot, Precision Medicine, and Regenerative Medicine, NAEVR has commended the Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee for ensuring that its bill provided greater-than-inflationary increases for all of NIH’s Institutes and Centers (I/Cs). NAEVR’s Capitol Hill advocacy, including a July 11 Dry Eye Awareness Month 2018 Advocacy Day, has been in support of the Senate bill.

Let’s make an accounting for vision in the FY2019 appropriations process: a Senate proposed $25 million NEI increase, and the House Defense bill’s proposed $20 million funding level for the Vision Research Program—a $5 million increase over the $15 million funding level in each FY2017 and FY2018. That yields a $30 million increase if these funding levels are included in final FY2019 appropriations. That is in addition to potential future funding from the BRAIN Initiative (about a third of funding levels are included in final FY2019 appropriations). The Regenerative Medicine Initiative, and the $500 million in FY2018 Opioid funding, with another $500 million proposed for FY2019. In recent meetings with researchers, NEI has advised that impending NIH-wide Opioid research funding announcements may provide an opportunity for ocular pain and dry eye researchers.

So, while there is a great deal of momentum for federally funded vision research, it all depends on the ability of Congress to finalize FY2019 appropriations in a timely fashion. Congressional appropriators have the will, and are proceeding with some semblance of “regular order”—meaning each chamber passing individual funding bills, conferencing those bills, and then finalizing, rather than one omnibus bill or a full-year Continuing Resolution. Although Congress has made great strides so far, the clock is ticking on time remaining before the September 30 end date for FY2018, especially with the August recess in the mix. The process could slow down or halt due to numerous factors—including Democrats holding up appropriations over the Immigrant Detention policy, Republicans holding firm on contentious policy riders in the bills, and Presidential veto threats.

NAEVR advocacy and AEVР education continue unabated, especially in this year of NEI’s 50th anniversary and NAEVR/AEVР’s 25th anniversary. As you can see in the image to the right, I was pleased to join Prevent Blindness Board Chair Torrey DeKeyser at the July 18 Focus on Eye Health National Summit in presenting a plaque to the NEI recognizing its anniversary. NEI Acting Deputy Director Michael Steinmetz, PhD, who also directs the Extramural Program, graciously accepted that award on behalf of NEI Director Paul Sieving, MD, PhD. As you view this Report’s images, you will see that Dr. Steinmetz has been engaged in significant outreach with the vision community to emphasize NEI and NIH funding opportunities, often appearing on the same panels as NAEVR/AEVР Executive Director James Jorkasky, who speaks about all federal funding sources.

I’ll be joining Jim on September 27 at AEVR’s Fourth Annual Emerging Vision Scientists (EVS) Day Congressional Reception, which also recognizes the Alliances’ 25th anniversary. I look forward to meeting the 21 EVSs chosen this year and viewing their research posters. Inclusive of this year’s class, AEVR will have brought more than 100 early-stage investigators with MDs, ODs, and PhDs to the Hill in the past four years to discuss their careers and the importance of robust funding for vision research. I want to thank Research to Prevent Blindness for providing grant support for this “signature” annual event that occurs at such an important time in the appropriations process.

As always, thank you for your support.

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Fall 2018 Events:

**September 14**
Rally for Medical Research Advocacy Day
(NAEVR as sponsor, Congressional Delegation Host)

**September 27**
AEVR Congressional Briefing:
International AMD Awareness Week 2018
12 Noon-1:15 pm, House Rayburn 2106

AEVR Congressional Reception:
Fourth Annual Emerging Vision Scientists Day on Capitol Hill, also recognizing NAEVR/AEVР’s 25th Anniversary
5:30 – 7:30 pm, House Rayburn Foyer
(Supported by a grant from Research to Prevent Blindness)

September 28
NAEVR Advocacy:
Emerging Vision Scientists Advocacy Day