At this January 25 event, Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-VT) and researcher Dr. Neil Bressler (Wilmer Eye Institute/Johns Hopkins University) spoke about the impact of vision impairment and eye disease on patients.

In recounting his recent cataract surgery, Sen. Jeffords commented that, “Over the years my own vision was becoming impaired. Then, about two months ago, I underwent a procedure to have cataracts removed and it has literally changed my life. It has also made me aware of just how important vision, and vision research, is to my life.” He added that, “the Vision and Blindness fact sheet makes very clear the reward that we all reap from society’s investment in vision research and how it is improving the lives of people every day.”

Dr. Bressler, a retinal researcher, reported on his recently published study on patients’ perception of the value of vision (American Medical Association’s Archives of Ophthalmology, December 2004), sponsored by the NEI. Patients with the advanced stage of age-related macular degeneration (AMD, the leading cause of vision loss in older Americans) equated the ‘preference value’ for this condition to symptomatic HIV infection or chronic renal failure on home dialysis. “This is an important finding,” said Bressler, “as an additional 200,000 Americans each year develop the advanced stage of AMD, and this number is expected to double in the next twenty years. We must have a strong, continuing federal commitment to all laboratory and clinical aspects of eye and vision research within the NEI to reduce the magnitude of blindness in this country and around the world.”


In a February 17 interview in Roll Call, Sen. Jeffords announced his intent to seek re-election in 2006 thanks to the eye and vision research community. "I feel good and healthy," said the 70-year old, adding that, "I just got two new eyes; I feel better than I have in years" and noted that his recent cataract surgery "pumped up my spirit, so I think I’ll go another term."