NAEVR MEETS WITH NIH DIRECTOR DR. ZERHOUNI

On January 16, 2004, a NAEVR-sponsored group met with NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni and NEI Director Dr. Paul Sieving. NAEVR updated Dr. Zerhouni on its activities to advocate for NIH and NEI budget increases on Capitol Hill and to educate Congress about the value of eye and vision research. NAEVR reported that it will continue to seek NEI funding at $711 million—reflecting a doubling of NEI's budget since FY1998—to fully support Dr. Sieving's initiatives to strengthen both the Intramural and Extramural research programs to meet the NEI and NIH research goals.

Dr. Zerhouni spoke enthusiastically about the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research and noted NEI's important role in the Nanotechnology and National Genotyping Database initiatives. NAEVR expressed its support for the Roadmap and commended Dr. Zerhouni for his leadership in eliminating roadblocks that prevent collaborative research and result in cost-effective use of research dollars. Before concluding, Dr. Zerhouni provided a compelling statistic—the $90 spent on NIH for each American annually is less than one-fifth of the average yearly healthcare cost increase of $500 per person.

After the meeting, participant Dr. Thomas Weingeist said, “I am encouraged by how supportive Dr. Zerhouni is of the NEI and the opportunities he feels that vision scientists and clinical investigators in the Intramural and Extramural programs have to participate in Roadmap initiatives. It is obvious that Dr. Zerhouni and Dr. Sieving share common goals and are identifying more effective ways to support vision scientists and clinicians in the future.”

Dr. Zerhouni has accepted ARVO's invitation to speak at its 2005 annual meeting, to be held May 1–6, 2005, at which the NIH-funded Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry, Dr. Peter Agre, will also speak.