Summer 2006

Contributor Report

President’s Message

Every Picture Tells a Story about NAEVR’s Vision Research Funding Strategy

This edition highlights the NAEVR staff and member networks’ extensive outreach with Capitol Hill and the administration, especially with the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittees in the House and Senate on a Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 spending bill and with the House Energy and Commerce Committee on reauthorization—both with a significant impact on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Eye Institute (NEI).

These activities are characterized by images taken by NAEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky and Advocacy Manager David Epstein. On June 20, I accompanied Jim and David on a series of Capitol Hill visits with key Members of Congress and their staff, and many visits are documented in images herein. I wish to offer a “back story” on these images based on my impressions and strategy discussions with Jim and David, as well as NAEVR Legislative Counsel John Porter.

Although medical research has broad bipartisan support, increasing NIH funding in the current fiscal environment faces many challenges. For example, despite the sense of the House in its Budget Resolution that health/education funding should be increased by $7.1 billion over the President’s FY2007 budget proposal, the LHHS allocation was increased by only $4.1 billion, none of which went to the NIH. In herding the bill’s restored or increased funding for education and community health programs, House Appropriations Committee Chair Jerry Lewis (R-CA) noted that the NIH had already experienced a 120 percent funding increase during the past decade. And in verbal comments at the June 7 Subcommittee markup, he stated that he had urged NIH

budget constraints. On June 20, I related my experience as a member of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee that reviewed NIH management to caution Energy & Commerce Committee members to “do no harm” in NIH reauthorization, emphasizing that it should not jeopardize the NEI Director’s authority to lead the nation’s vision research commitment with an accompanying dedicated budget.

The vision community has been incredibly responsive in offering up examples to Congress on the impact of its actions on vision research, especially through emails and letters sent directly to Congress. I appreciate this input and ask you to redouble your efforts in that regard, as literally anything can still happen in this session of Congress—before and after the November election.

— Stephen J. Ryan, M.D.
Doheny Eye Institute
NAEVR/AEVR Boards President
sryan@doheny.org