Before its recess on August 5, the House passed all twelve of its FY 2008 appropriations bills, including H.R. 3043, the LHHS funding bill passed on July 19 that includes a $750 million and $9.9 million increase, respectively, for the NIH and the NEI over FY2007 [see funding chart]. Although the Senate Appropriations Committee has reported out S. 1710, the Senate's FY2008 LHHS funding bill that increases NIH and NEI funding by $1 billion and $14.8 million, respectively, it has yet to be considered on the Senate floor. Both bills were developed with strong bipartisan support.

Although by the recess the Senate had only passed the Homeland Security appropriations bill, Senate Majority Leader Sen. Reid (D-NV) has vowed an ambitious schedule for early September devoted to passing remaining bills. Critics remain skeptical of this timing, however, especially since the Senate LHHS bill debate could focus on a potentially controversial provision that would make embryonic stem cell lines that existed prior to June 15, 2007, eligible for federally funded research, updating it from the August 9, 2001, date of the President’s initial policy. Earlier this year, the House and Senate passed versions of The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act—which NAEVR supported—but did not have sufficient votes to override a Presidential veto.

Congress must pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the government with the start of FY2008 on October 1 as it deals with finalizing appropriations and the threat of Presidential vetoes of most major bills since they exceed his budget proposal. At this time, it is appearing more likely that non-defense/homeland security appropriations may be wrapped into an omnibus bill, or major programs may be funded through a series of CRs or by a year-long resolution, as was done in FY2007. In its advocacy, NAEVR continues to emphasize the need for both increased and timely FY2008 NIH/NEI appropriations, such that researchers do not have to rely on bridge or philanthropic funding in advance of grant awards.

### NAEVR Scorecard

**ISSUES**

**Future Uncertain for House and Senate FY2008 Appropriations Bills Which Include NIH/NEI Funding Increases**

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### NEI Director Dr. Sieving Testifies Before the Senate

On June 22, Dr. Sieving testified before the Senate LHHS Subcommittee in a hearing appropriately entitled *A New Vision for Medical Research*. This was the last in a series of hearings with NIH Institute/Center Directors, which were reinstated after an absence of several years as part of the FY2008 appropriations process led by Chair Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), in conjunction with Ranking Member Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA). NAEVR has commended them for their leadership in this regard.

“NEI-funded research has resulted in remarkable advances to save and restore sight,” stated Dr. Sieving, who in written and verbal testimony focused his comments on the vision public health challenge resulting from the aging of the baby boom generation. Citing age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of vision loss, as an example of NEI research that meets NIH goals of research that is preemptive/preventive, predictive, personalized, and participatory, he described NEI’s identification of genes associated with an increased risk of developing AMD, NEI’s demonstration that antioxidant vitamins and minerals can reduce the progression of moderate to severe AMD by 25 percent, and new Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved ophthalmic drugs that are stabilizing and restoring vision loss.