Despite NIH Reauthorization Stalling, NAEVR Voices Opposition to Budget Clusters

The House Energy and Commerce Committee did not proceed beyond an August 2005 draft of NIH reauthorization legislation, primarily due to the press of post-Katrina issues and the medical research advocacy community’s (and NAEVR’s) strong opposition to a provision to cluster Institute budgets. The provision would reduce the NIH budget to three line items: the Office of the Director; a cluster of “mission specific” Institutes (which includes NEI); and a cluster of “science-enabling” Institutes/Centers (IC).

In a December 7 letter to NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni, NAEVR acknowledged Dr. Zerhouni’s personal support for retention of individual IC line item budgets, which he expressed at an October 20 NIH Town Hall Meeting. NAEVR also supported Dr. Zerhouni’s vision of a “common fund” for trans-Institute research, but did so provisionally, pending resolution of concerns about how it would be implemented. NAEVR distributed its letter to all members of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

During its January 20 Lobby Day (refer to back page), ARVO members met with Republican and Democratic staff of Committee leaders, who noted that a timetable for action this session had not been set. NAEVR will continue to lead on this issue, as well as work with coalition partners, having recently joined the National Health Council’s NIH Issue Team.

Cheryl Jaeger, office of Cong. Roy Blunt (R-MO) and lead Republican staff member on the NIH reauthorization issue, meets with Dr. Krishna Sharma (University of Missouri) during the recent ARVO Lobby Day.