As in past years, ARVO researchers from the Annual Meeting Program Committee were among the first on Capitol Hill to advocate for increased NIH funding, generally, and NEI, specifically. In 35 visits, the 13 domestic and 9 international advocates urged Members of the 111th Congress, Second Session, to support FY2011 NIH funding at $35 billion to fully leverage and maintain the current momentum of research. In initial comments, the researchers thanked the offices for the $18.5 million increase in FY2010 NEI funding, as well as the $175 million two-year funding that NEI received of the $10.4 billion ARRA funding. They then emphasized that, due to the combination of “regular” and stimulus appropriations, the NIH biomedical research enterprise has been funded at a net level of $35 billion in FY2009 and FY2010, and that level is necessary to prevent a reduction in the number of grants.

The researchers shared a NAEVR fact sheet about ARRA-supported NEI research. Five of the domestic advocates had received ARRA funding, including John Ash, Ph.D., Joseph Carroll, Ph.D., Marc Kantorow, Ph.D., Leonard Levin, M.D., Ph.D., FARVO, and W. Daniel Stamer, Ph.D., FARVO. “For many Hill offices, this was the first opportunity to meet ARRA-funded researchers and learn about implications of their work to prevent blindness and restore vision, as well as to retain or hire staff,” said NAEVR’s James Jorkasky, who accompanied the researchers along with NAEVR Advocacy Manager David Epstein.

Participants not shown in the images include: Leonard Levin, M.D., Ph.D., FARVO (University of Montreal/University of Wisconsin), John Ash, Ph.D. (University of Oklahoma Health Science Center), Muna Naash, Ph.D., FARVO (University of Oklahoma Health Science Center), and Motohiro Kamei, M.D. (Osaka University Graduate School of Medicine.)