LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD ISSUE—DEFENSE VISION FUNDING

Congress Funds VTRP in FY2013 at Record $10 M

Both the House and Senate versions of H.R. 933 fund the Vision Trauma Research Program (VTRP) line at $10 million. Since the sequester reduces defense spending by eight percent, this would net $9.2 million. Although the highest amount appropriated in any one past fiscal year for the VTRP has been $4 million, the DOD’s Telemedicine and Advanced Technology Research Center (TATRC) which manages the program has combined years and added transferred funds to increase the net. For example, in its FY2011–2012 cycle, TATRC has awarded $14 million in awards to a total of 21 vision researchers, reflecting Congressional appropriations of $4 million in FY2011 and $3.2 million in FY2012, plus $7 million transferred over from other DOD agencies due to the quality and responsiveness of the vision grants.

“Ultimately, it was Cong. Tim Walz’s (D-MN) and Cong. Rodney Frelinghuysen’s (R-NJ) bipartisan efforts last July on the House floor to increase the VTRP from $5 million to $10 million that has made this unprecedented funding level possible,” said NAEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky. “Since the Senate’s version of H.R. 933 adopted the House bill’s $10 million VTRP line, it also sets a precedent for the Senate to establish a VTRP line and fund it at $10 million as a baseline.” Jorkasky explained that, in past years, the House defense appropriations bill specified a VTRP line while the Senate bill included vision research with other areas of research in a pool of funds, meaning that final VTRP funding was the result of conferencing two very different bills.

NAEVR anticipates that TATRC will release a Program Announcement in May. Contact NAEVR’s David Epstein at depstein@eyeresearch.org to be added to the “DOD Interest Email List” to receive updates on funding opportunities and awards.

Two Important Defense Sessions at ARVO 2013 In Seattle

  This session features prominent investigators discussing their research into Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and visual function in military service members and veterans.
  This session features DOD-funded investigators who will offer advice on being responsive to DOD Program Announcements.

VSOs/MSOs Support FY2014 VTRP at $10 Million

The FY2014 issue of the Independent Budget—an annual set of recommendations to Congress regarding Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funding, which is developed by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and supported by 54 other Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and Military Service Organizations (MSOs)—has once again called for increased funding for vision trauma research.

The 27th annual edition of the Independent Budget recommends that Congress fund the VTRP at $10 million, citing NAEVR’s 2012 Cost of Military Eye Injury and Blindness study which estimated the total projected cost to the economy resulting from combat operations from 2000 through 2010 at $25.1 billion, including the present value of future costs such as VA and Social Security benefits and lost or decreased wages. The Independent Budget also calls on the VA to assess the bed capacity and staffing levels in VA blind rehabilitation centers to ensure that they meet the demands of the new programs being implemented by the VA.

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) has sent a letter to Congressional defense appropriators also requesting FY2014 VTRP funding at $10 million. BVA was joined by signatories Paralyzed Veterans of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart USA, Inc., Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, the National Association of Uniformed Services, AMVETS, Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, Military Officers Association of America, and the Association of the United States Navy.

NAEVR deeply appreciates the support of the VSOs and MSOs.

Visit the Defense-related Vision Research section of NAEVR’s Web site for more details