As in past years, the early February date of the NAEVR-managed Advocacy Day associated with ARVO’s Annual Meeting Planning Committee (AMPC) meeting meant that vision researchers were among the first advocates on Capitol Hill to request FY2020 NIH/NEI funding increases.

ARVO’s 25 domestic and international advocates—including AMPC members, Advocacy and Outreach Committee members, and Science Communication Training Fellows—made nearly 40 delegation office visits, including those of new Members of the 116th Congress and members assigned to key committees with NIH funding and oversight jurisdiction. NAEVR also coordinated “supergroup” visits of the advocates with the leadership and ranking Staff Directors of the Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee who wanted to hear whether the recent NIH/NEI increases were making research grant and training funding more accessible.

Reflecting on the day, NAEVR’s James Jorkasky stated, “I wish to thank ARVO Advocacy and Outreach Chair Peter Koulen, PhD (University of Missouri) for leading by example in participating in every aspect of the event. From his past experience as an advocate, he advised participants to first speak about their research and how its potential to preserve sight and restore vision provides a valuable return on investment—to the district, state, and the nation. I also wish to thank the advocates, both seasoned investigators and the Science Communication Fellows, who educated staff about the importance of training programs that develop early-stage investigators. This aspect of research is not always discussed, and it is critical to develop the next generation of vision scientists.”

NAEVR’s James Jorkasky and David Epstein were pleased to join ARVO’s Marisa Lavine, Jason Spessard, and Julene Joy in hosting the visits and taking images.