# Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the National Eye Institute and Designate 2010 – 2020 as the "Decade of Vision"

Dear Colleague:

Next week, we will be introducing a resolution that recognizes the 40th anniversary of the National Eye Institute (NEI) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and designates 2010-2020 as the *Decade of Vision.*

Eye disease is a significant public health problem. Those disproportionately affected are our aging population, the African American and Hispanic communities, and those who suffer from chronic diseases, especially diabetes. The NEI estimates that eye disease and vision impairment currently cost the nation $68 billion in healthcare costs, lost productivity, reduced independence, diminished quality of life, and accelerated mortality.

The NEI leads our nation's efforts to prevent blindness and to save and restore vision. NEI has been a leader in both basic and translational research; its researchers have been able to associate one-quarter of all genes discovered to date with eye disease and vision impairment. NEI has conducted more than 60 clinical trials that have resulted in treatments and therapies that save sight and, in some cases, actually reverse vision loss.

NEI estimates that, over the decade 2010-2020, the number of individuals over age 40 who experience blindness, low vision, or an age-related eye disease such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and cataract will grow from 38 million to 50 million. As a result, NEI's leadership in directing vital vision research over the next decade will be more important than ever.

Please join us in recognizing the 40th anniversary of the NEI and designating 2010-2020 as the *Decade of Vision.* To become an original co-sponsor, please contact Elizabeth Lee in Ms. Baldwin's office at 5-2906 or Keagan Lenihan in Mr. Sessions' office at 5-2231.

Sincerely,

Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress

Pete Sessions
Member of Congress