

House:



LHHs Subcommittee Chairman
Tom Cole (R-OK)



LHHs Subcommittee Ranking
Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)

On July 14 and after a day-and-a-half marathon session, the House Appropriations Committee approved its FY2017 LHHs bill which had been marked up and approved by the LHHs Appropriations Subcommittee on July 7 with a \$1.25 billion, or 3.9 percent, NIH increase and a \$27.6 million, or 3.9 percent, NEI increase.

In discussion, Subcommittee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) stated that, "I want to be clear that I view the mark we set today as a floor, not a ceiling, for biomedical research funding, and I am hopeful this number can increase as the process moves forward." He noted that he would work with his Senate counterpart Subcommittee Chairman Blunt to do the best they could within the budget caps. He added, "And what we probably need to do in this area is have a sustained increase over a long period of time, so that the researchers know it, frankly some of the people coming into the field know it, so they can build a career knowing they're going to have the opportunities to do what they want to and what they're trained to do. And that's what we're trying to do in this bill, and that's what we'll continue trying to do, working with the Senate, because we want this to become a habit that we almost take for granted."

Unlike the bipartisan Senate bill, the House bill includes numerous policy riders that the Democratic members of the Subcommittee attempted to strike. Led by Ranking Member Cong. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Democratic members also offered several amendments in both the Subcommittee and Committee markups to restore funding to key programs in the bill. In one amendment during full Appropriations consideration, Cong. DeLauro proposed to increase NIH funding by \$750 million—to match the Senate bill—by funding the Cancer

Moonshot at \$550 million and proportionately increasing funding within the Institutes and Centers—funding for which would have been offset by declaring the Opioid Abuse and Infectious Diseases Rapid Response Reserve Fund as emergency funding outside of budget caps. The amendment failed along party lines.

Since Congress adjourned on July 14 for the expanded Summer recess—due to the conventions—it has just a few weeks in September to conclude legislative business prior to the start of FY2017 on October 1. Although leadership has indicated a desire to complete appropriations, Congress will likely pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to maintain government operations, which could be as long as a six-month duration.

NAEVR Comments on Senate and House Proposed NIH/NEI Funding Increases

NAEVR, which had requested FY2017 NIH funding of \$34.5 billion and NEI funding of \$770 million, commended the Senate and House actions to increase biomedical research funding for the second year. But NAEVR also recognized the importance of adequately funding the Institutes and Centers, including the NEI, as follows:

"NAEVR is disappointed that the bill's NEI funding level falls short of the \$770 million requested. The Alliance will continue to impress upon Congress the importance of robust funding for the Institutes and Centers, in addition to the funding of new NIH initiatives. After all, vision health is critical to the productivity, independence, and quality of life of all Americans."

LHHs Appropriations Leaders Also Champion Defense Vision Funding

In addition to proposing FY2017 NIH/NEI funding increases, both LHHs Subcommittee Chairman Blunt and Chairman Cole have championed a \$5 million increase in FY2017 funding for the dedicated Vision Research Program in Defense appropriations to \$15 million.

Private Funding Foundations Educate About their Role in Vision Research, Advocate for Increased NEI Funding



On April 6, NAEVR hosted the second annual Advocacy Day for private foundations within the vision community which had met the previous day under the auspices of Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB).

The seven participants representing five organizations from across the country met with 16 Congressional offices in both the House and Senate—the latter in session that week. For most, it was an opportunity to build upon their initial visits conducted in late March 2015. In addition to describing their important role in the local economy, the advocates emphasized their support for researchers at academic institutions throughout the nation—often for investigators in the early stage of their careers or as bridge funding for established researchers.

Commenting on the day's activities, RPB President Brian F. Hofland, Ph.D. said, "RPB is pleased to have participated in the second annual Private Funding Foundation Advocacy Day. We support both early-career and early-stage vision research to better nurture and position innovative ideas for follow-on federal support. These meetings with Congressional offices emphasized the urgency of finding and funding solutions to eye problems endured by millions."



Brian Hofland, Ph.D., from Research to Prevent Blindness, with Morgan Brand from the office of Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY)



Tom Brunner, left, from the Glaucoma Research Foundation, and Kathleen Rydar, right, from That Man May See, with Tyler Lorig, Ph.D. from the office of Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). Dr. Lorig is a neuroscience researcher working as a Health Policy Fellow in the office.



Dayne Cutrell from the office of Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL) with Torrey Van Antwerp DeKeyser and Shirley Hamilton, both from the EyeSight Foundation of Alabama



Ziky Ababiya from the office of Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) with Michael Buckley from BrightFocus Foundation. Sen. Mikulski serves as Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

NASEM (IOM) Study to Issue in September

At the Fifth Annual *Focus on Eye Health National Summit*, hosted by Prevent Blindness and sponsored by AEVR, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), formerly the Institute of Medicine (IOM), announced that its study entitled *Public Health Approaches to Reduce Vision Impairment and Promote Eye Health* would issue on September 15. NAEVR and other study sponsors (see box below) will work with NASEM to disseminate study results widely to legislators, policy makers, and the media.

NAEVR's James Jorkasky with Prevent Blindness President and CEO Hugh Parry



For the third year, RPB organized a meeting of private funding foundations to seek collaborative solutions in addressing big questions in vision research. Among the 25 participating organizations were key federal agencies, including the NEI, represented by Director Paul Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), represented by Jinan Saaddine, M.D., M.P.H., Team Lead for the Vision Health Initiative, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), represented by Malvina Eydelman, M.D., Director of the Division of Ophthalmic, and Ear, Nose and Throat Devices within FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH). NAEVR Executive Director James Jorkasky participated and provided an update on federal funding for vision research.

NASEM Study Sponsors

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Eye Institute
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Optometry
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Prevent Blindness and the National Center
for Children's Vision and Eye Health
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