

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the Right Place at the Right Time!



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As you can see above, this first edition of the Report for 2018 bears the NAEVR/AEVR 25th Anniversary logo. What a year it has already been for the Alliances, which have been in the right place at the right time with advocacy and education by vision researchers!

Throughout 2017 and into this year, NAEVR advocated for a budget deal that would raise nondefense spending caps to facilitate Senate-proposed funding increases for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Eye Institute (NEI)—especially in this year of the 50th Anniversary of NEI's creation by Congress. On February 9, Congress passed the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018* that raised defense and nondefense spending caps in the two-year framework, including Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 and 2019. Within hours of passage, NAEVR hosted an Advocacy Day for members of the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO), who were able to thank their Congressional offices for the deal and be among the first to request robust and sustained funding as Congress proceeded to finalize FY2018 appropriations, as well as begin the FY2019 process.

Fast forward to the week of March 19, when Congress was facing a March 23 expiration date for the fifth Continuing Resolution (CR) that funded the government. Just as rumors indicated that a negotiated FY2018 Omnibus spending bill would soon issue, more than 80 members of the American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus (AAPOS) visited their Congressional delegations to support NIH/NEI funding, with messaging developed by NAEVR for this American Academy of Ophthalmology-managed event. And just two days later, as the House was taking floor action on the Omnibus bill entitled the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018*—with significant funding increases for the NIH/NEI—NAEVR hosted Private Vision Research Funding Foundations in Congressional visits to support the bill and urge a robust FY2019 increase. Advocates also had one last chance to ask their Senators to support the bill, as the Senate did not complete their floor action until early the next morning.

As detailed inside, the FY2018 \$3 billion NIH and \$41 million NEI increase are historic, as we have not seen such increases since the NIH-doubling ended in FY2002. As much as NAEVR is now thanking Members for their bipartisan support for the NIH,

our FY2019 messaging is noting that FY2018 NEI funding is still only ten percent greater than that in pre-sequester FY2012—meaning that the 1.6 percent average annual increase over the six years pales in comparison to the average annual inflation rate of 2.8 percent. NIH/NEI increases are still needed to make up for the years of cuts, flat funding, and biomedical inflation that have significantly reduced purchasing power.

An FY2019 NIH funding increase is not a given, since FY2018 reflects the third year of increases. Despite having strong bipartisan support, the NIH will be competing with other Congressional priorities in the FY2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) spending bill when allocations are made based on the second year of the budget deal. NAEVR's advocacy efforts will remain strong and focused, as we request NIH funding of at least \$39.3 billion and NEI funding of at least \$800 million.

Be sure to read about the successful NEI 50th Anniversary Congressional Reception, held amidst the Omnibus negotiations and a government closure due to inclement weather. As stated by NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD at the event—and something which our community already knows—“vision research has played a disproportionately large share in scientific breakthroughs.”

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Alliances Executive Director James Jorkasky with NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD at the March 21 NEI 50th Anniversary Congressional Reception. See story inside.

NAEVR/AEVR at the 2018 ARVO Annual Meeting

Sunday, April 29 - Wednesday, May 2
NAEVR Central
8:15 am - 5:00 pm Daily
Honolulu Convention Center

Monday, April 29
NAEVR's Defense-Related Vision Research Opportunities Session
7:00 am - 8:00 am, Room 313BC
Honolulu Convention Center

Each the NAEVR and AEVR Board is pleased to announce the election of the following Directors to the Class of 2018-2021:



Mark Gordon, MS (Alcon Laboratories, Inc.)



Paul Lee, MD, JD (Kellogg Eye Center/ University of Michigan)



Jonathan Talamo, MD (Johnson & Johnson Vision)