Emerging Vision Scientists to Congress: Finalize FY2020 Spending Bills Since Delayed Appropriations Hurt

**NEED TO KNOW:**
On September 19 and under the auspices of NAEVR, the EVSs visited their Congressional delegation offices where they requested final, robust FY2020 NIH/NEI appropriations.

**EVS Impressions/Development**
The Alliances designed this program to be an important component of an EVS's professional development and to train the next generation of vision research advocates. This year’s participants commented...

“…” — Dr. Collery

“I could feel the enthusiasm as I described the tremendous impact of NIH funding and the importance of my research to help people with vision loss as I spoke to the Congressional staff. They were extremely positive and engaged, and I had the opportunity to drive home the message that robust increases in NIH/NEI funding are critical to support our work that has direct, meaningful impact on visually impaired patients and has great potential to substantially improve clinical care nationwide. It is truly an exciting time to be a young clinician-scientist who will help shape the future of vision research.” — Dr. Bittner

**Sponsor RPB Comments**
For the fifth year, RPB provided a grant to support AENVR’s events. RPB President Dr. Brian Hofland commented:

“The Fifth Annual EVS Day was important—the cost of biomedical research goes up significantly each year with the rapid rate of medical inflation, and it’s essential that we educate members of Congress and their staffs on the need to provide robust funding for cutting-edge vision research. It’s also important to help early-career scientists bring their real-life research experiences to the Hill. Through this event we’re empowering participants to make an immediate difference in the future of our field and, hopefully, setting up a life-long commitment to science advocacy.”

**NAEVR Advocacy Day**
The 20 EVSs conducted Congressional office visits in which they thanked Congress for robust NIH/NEI funding increases in the FY2016-2019 timeframe, as well as for passing the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019 in late July that increases the FY2020 and 2021 spending caps. In requesting that Congress finalize FY2020 appropriations in a timely fashion with continued robust increases, they also cautioned about the detrimental impact that Continuing Resolutions can have on research, including delaying awards or requiring researchers to seek “bridge” funding while awaiting funding. That same day, however, the House did pass a CR funding the government in FY2020 until November 21, as the House and Senate were mired in disagreement over appropriation bills’ top-line funding levels and policy riders.

In House visits, the EVSs also requested that the Member become a co-sponsor of H.R. 2620, the Faster Cures and Treatments for Eye Diseases Act, which would authorize and implement the “Eye Bond” program of private funding to speed translational vision research.

**Daniel Coates, PhD (University of Houston College of Optometry), right, with Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)**

**Jesson Martin, PhD (Kentucky College of Optometry) with Cong. Hal Rogers (R-KY), Ranking Member on the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee with jurisdiction over the Vision Research Program (VRP) funding**

**From left: Dr. Lee and Abigail Fahim, MD, PhD (both from the Kellogg Eye Center/University of Michigan) with Devin Parsens, office of Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI)**

**Ava Bittner, OD, PhD (UCLA/Jules Stein Eye Institute) with Aurora Pak, office of Cong. Ted Lieu (D-CA)**

**An-Jey Su, PhD (University of Colorado), right, with Sherie Lou Santos, office of Cong. Diana DeGette (D-CO)**

**Lynn Hassman, MD, PhD (Washington University) with Daniel Kushi, office of Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO)**

**From left: Muneeb Faiq, MD (NYU/Langone), Jasmin Palomares, office of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Ajay Kuriyan, MD, PhD (both from the Kellogg Eye Center/University of Michigan) with Devin Parsens, office of Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI)**

**From left: Flueneb Faiz, PhD (NYU/Langone), Jasmin Palomares, office of Sen. Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY), Ajay Kuriyan, MD (Clauw Eye/University of Rochester), and Brian Holland, PhD (Research to Prevent Blindness)**

**From left: Jessica Steen, OD (NOVA Southeastern College of Optometry), left, and Florence Cabot, PhD (Medical College of Wisconsin) with Cong. Mike Doyle (D-PA)**

**From left: Jessica Steen, OD (NOVA Southeastern College of Optometry), left, and Florence Cabot, PhD (Medical College of Wisconsin) with Cong. Mike Doyle (D-PA)**

**From left: Jessica McNiece, office of Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), with Stephanie Adams, OD, PhD (Illinois College of Optometry). Sen. Durbin is a Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee member**

**Susan da Silva, PhD (University of Pittsburgh) with Kate Werley, office of Cong. Mike Doyle (D-PA)**

**From left: Jessica McNiece, office of Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), with Stephanie Adams, OD, PhD (Illinois College of Optometry). Sen. Durbin is a Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee member**

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