On September 12, President Biden announced his intent to appoint Dr. Renee Wegrzyn as the first Director of ARPA-H. Dr. Wegrzyn is currently the Vice President of Business Development at Ginkgo Bioworks and Head of Innovation at Concentric by Ginko.

Dr. Wegrzyn has also served as a program manager for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) which is what ARPA-H is modeled after (high-risk, high-reward research). Dr. Wegrzyn brings a wealth of experience and is expected to replace Dr. Adam H. Russell who has served as the Acting Deputy Director since May 2022.

Earlier this year, the Biden Administration placed ARPA-H within NIH but had the Director reporting directly to the Secretary of Health and Human Services. With the House and Senate divided on final budget authority, changes could be made to the current structure. Pending final Congressional action in the House and Senate appropriations process expected at the expiration of the CR, the determination for which agency maintains the budget authority for ARPA-H will be made. Reporting authority for both chambers keeps ARPA-H reporting to the Secretary of HHS.

ARPA-H continues to present a significant opportunity for vision researchers as the agency gets up and running. With vision researchers at the forefront of groundbreaking research, ARPA-H will have an opportunity to work with NEI and other institutes to identify research projects that may lead to early wins and significant advancements. As such, NAEVR is supportive of ARPA-H remaining supplemental to NIH and NEI base funding. NAEVR will be advocating for ARPA-H to work with partners at NEI and the DOD Vision Research Program (VRP) to help identify research opportunities for vision researchers to play a role in supporting new initiatives.