DEFENSE-RELATED VISION FUNDING

Since it was created by Congress in FY2009, the Vision Research Program (VRP) has been funded by Congress at $124.5 million and has funded 117 projects for a total of $118 million.

House FY2021 Defense Spending Bill Proposes $20 Million in VRP Funding

On July 31, the House approved a six bill “minibus” that contained both the FY2021 Defense and LHHS spending bills (details on latter in inside left page). The Defense spending bill, which includes funding for the VRP and all DOD Health Programs, funds the VRP at a level of $20 million, the same as in each FY2019 and FY2020. NAEVR had requested FY2021 VRP funding at $30 million, a $10 million increase. To support this increase, NAEVR cited results from AEVR’s 2018 update of the Cost of Military Eye Injury study, published in the May/June 2019 edition of the journal Military Medicine, that estimated total cost from the 2000-2017 timeframe at $41.5 billion, with $40.2 billion of that cost reflecting the present value of a lifetime of long-term benefits, lost wages, and family care.

In most years, the counterpart bill from the Senate Appropriations Committee only funds a small number of the DOD research programs and accepts the House funding levels for the remainder, so this number is unlikely to change on the Senate side. The Senate does not plan to issue its spending bills until September.

NAEVR/AEVR Move, with New Address

Note that the Alliances moved in early July, along with ARVO from which it sublets space, to a new address:

5515 Security Lane, Suite 500
Rockville, Maryland 20852-1606

NAEVR/AEVR
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FY2020: VRP Program Committee Issues Program Announcements

As noted in the DOD Webinar story (inside middle page), on May 20 the VRP issued its FY2020 Program Announcement, with VRP funding at $20 million. Prior on April 1, the VRP Program Committee held a Vision Setting Web meeting in which NAEVR participated as a guest and during which the Committee established research goals and chose funding mechanisms for the FY2020 funding cycle. The three distinct funding mechanisms include:

• Investigator Initiated Research Awards (IIRA, with two funding levels), with a maximum funding of $260,000 over 2 years/$750,000 over 3 years.
• Translational Research Awards (TRA), with a maximum funding of $1 million over 3 years.
• Focused Translational Team Science Awards (FTTSA), with a maximum funding of $5 million over 4 years.

Pre-applications were due July 28, and full applications will be due November 18.

Researchers who would like to be informed about potential DOD funding opportunities should contact NAEVR’s David Epstein at depstein@eyeresearch.org to be added to NAEVR’s Defense Research Interest List.

FY2019: VRP Program Committee Finalizing Awards

Following up on decisions made at the VRP Program Committee’s March 31 meeting, the VRP has been contacting researchers to negotiate contracts for the selected projects. In the FY2019 cycle, the VRP received 127 Pre-Applications and invited 72 researchers to submit full proposals, receiving 65 compliant applications. Of those, 21 were recommended for funding, reflecting a success rate of 32.3 percent, and a total of $17.92 million will be awarded (net of $20 million funding and CDMRP administrative costs). A list of all projects selected for funding is available on the CDMRP Web site.

BVA Hosting November 2020 Veterans Day Events

Alliances member Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) has been chosen to host the November 11 Veterans Day 2020 Wreath-Laying event at Arlington Cemetery—the first time for a vision-related veterans group to serve in this capacity. BVA will host a reception of Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), Military Service Organizations (MSOs), dignitaries, and sponsors (which includes NAEVR) at a reception at Ft. Myer, Va. At this time BVA is proceeding with the intent to hold all events as planned, although this could change in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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