

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR EYE AND VISION RESEARCH (NAEVR) LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

	FY2021 Final	FY2022 Final	FY2023 Final	FY2024 NAEVR Request	FY2024 President's Budget	FY2024 House Budget	FY2024 Senate Budget
NIH	\$42.93 B +3%	\$44.96 B +4.72%	\$47.46 B +5.6%	\$50.924 B +7.3%	\$48.265 B +1.7%	\$44.6 B -6%	\$47.8 B +7%
NEI	\$835.71 M +1.4%	\$863.9 M +3.4%	\$896.55 M +3.8%	\$975 M +8.7%	\$896.5 M +0%	\$896.5 M +0%	\$896.5 M +0%

- The FY2023 budget includes funding for ARPA-H within NIH and includes an increase of \$500 million to \$1.5 B
- The House FY2024 budget proposal decreases ARPA-H by \$1 B to \$500 M while the Senate proposal keeps ARPA-H level funded
- The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (Debt Ceiling Agreement) put caps on federal spending for FY2024 and FY2025

DEBT CEILING IMPACT ON APPROPRIATIONS

On June 3, the President signed the “2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act,” an agreement to raise the nation’s debt ceiling while enacting concessions on current and future spending.

The agreement ultimately extends the borrowing limit for two years which gets the nation past the 2024 elections while effectively freezing domestic spending on non-defense programs for the next two years. The agreement also rescinds \$30 billion in unspent COVID-19 money that was intended for the COVID-19 response and to prepare for future pandemics, and several billion dollars from the IRS that was included as part of the Inflation Reduction Act to increase enforcement and customer service.

Essentially, the non-defense spending freeze represents an effective cut in real dollars when accounting for inflation over

the next two years and falls well short of the 7.3% increase the Biden Administration had sought for FY2024 in overall spending.

The agreement also seeks to limit the threat of a government shutdown for the next two years by requiring Congress to pass all twelve annual appropriations bills prior to January 1, 2024. If this is not achieved, the agreement stipulates that a continuing resolution would kick in that would cut discretionary spending for both defense and non-defense agencies by 1% until all the bills are passed. This provision is intended to incentivize lawmakers to pass each appropriations bill independently instead of in an omnibus, as both Democrats and Republicans want to avoid a cut to their key priorities. The same contingency would be in effect for 2025.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE FY2024 SPENDING BILL CUTS NIH \$2.8 BILLION, FLAT FUNDS NEI

On June 22, the House marked up the Labor, Health and Human Services and Related Agencies (LHHS) bill. The markup was very contentious, with Democrats strongly criticizing the bill for its severe cuts to social programs. The bill passed by a voice vote, clearing it for full Committee consideration. The bill would fund the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at a level of \$44.6 billion, a cut of \$2.8 billion compared with the final FY2023 spending levels, or 6%. The

National Eye Institute (NEI) would be funded at a level of \$896.5 million, the same amount as in FY2023.

Of the \$2.8 billion reduction in the NIH funding level, most of the proposed cuts are attributed to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which would be cut \$1.5 billion, the Office of the Director, which would be cut \$573 million, and the NIH Innovation Fund (21st Century

Cures Act) which would be cut \$678 million. Almost all the Institutes were flat-funded, with a couple of exceptions. In the House's proposed budget, none of the individual Institutes would see their funding increase over FY2023. In addition to the cut of \$2.8 billion to the NIH base, the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Health (ARPA-H) would be cut

by an additional \$1 billion.

NAEVR, along with the larger medical research advocacy community, had requested FY2024 NIH funding of \$50.924 billion. NAEVR had asked Congress to fund the NEI at a level of \$975 million, an increase of \$78.8 million over FY2023.

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FY2024 SPENDING BILL MARGINALLY INCREASING NIH FUNDING, FLAT FUNDS NEI

On July 27, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed its FY2024 LHHHS spending bill.

The bill would fund the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at a level of \$47.8 billion, an increase of \$943 million over FY2023 (+.7%). This stands in contrast to the bill approved by the House LHHHS Appropriations Subcommittee, which made severe cuts to the overall NIH funding level. The Senate bill funds the National Eye Institute at a level of \$896.5 million, the same amount as FY2023 and what the House bill provides.

The bill also funds the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Health (ARPA-H) at a level of \$1.5 billion, the same level it was funded at in FY2023. The House-passed bill proposes to cut ARPA-H funding by \$1 billion.

On June 22, the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee approved its FY2024 spending bill which included \$20 million for the VRP, the sixth year that the VRP has been funded at that level.

Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) opened the Senate mark by saying that the bills recognize the spending limits imposed by the debt limit bill negotiated between the

President and Congress earlier this year and that the bills are 'serious' and the product of bipartisan efforts.

In her opening remarks, Committee Vice Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) noted that this marks the first time in 5 years that the Committee has passed all 12 individual appropriations bills, and that she hopes that Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY) will begin bringing packages of bills to the Senate floor in September. She also said she was proud of the funding increases for the NIH, noting the increases for research on Alzheimer's, Cancer, and Diabetes.

The significant differences between the House and Senate-passed LHHHS spending bills will likely present a challenge for Conference Committee members from the two chambers who must meet to iron out differences between the bills before final passage before the September 30th deadline.

With less than a month to complete work on all 12 Appropriations bills before the start of the new fiscal year on October 1, Congress is already preparing for the possibility of a shutdown or short-term Continuing Resolution (CR). If all bills are not finalized and passed before January 1, 2024, an automatic 1% cut would be implemented across all federal spending.

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE FY2024 SPENDING BILL FLAT FUNDS DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE VISION RESEARCH PROGRAM

On June 22, the House included \$20 million in funding for the Vision Research Program funded within the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) within the Department of Defense (DOD). This represents the sixth consecutive year the program has been level funded.

Read the Sign-On Letter from the Vision Research Community for FY2024 NEI Funding Here:

