

NAEVR SCORECARD LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

Whither FY2020 Appropriations?

At press time in late July, Congressional leadership and the Trump Administration announced that they had arrived at a final deal to raise the *Budget Control Act (BCA)* caps for each FY2020 and FY2021, as well as to suspend the debt limit until July 31, 2021. *The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019 (BBA)* fully replaces the \$55 billion in cuts scheduled to take effect in FY2020 and increases funding for nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs by \$56.5 billion over the next two fiscal years above the current level. In its Capitol Hill advocacy, NAEVR had urged a two-year bipartisan budget deal that raises NDD caps to facilitate continued robust NIH and NEI funding increases.

The House, which has already passed ten of its twelve FY2020 spending bills (see story right) after setting spending caps higher than those in the *BCA*, is expected to act on the *BBA* prior to its July 26 recess, and the Senate is expected to act prior to its August 2 recess. Although the Senate has not yet marked up any of its spending bills while awaiting a budget deal, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) has announced that he will set the top-line allocations during the August recess, enabling staff to finalize spending bills and prepare them for Subcommittee markups once lawmakers return on September 9.

If the *BBA* is not passed—or if it passes and the Senate does not finalize its bills by the end of FY2019 or the House and Senate cannot conference their respective bills prior to September 30—the government could shut down, unless Congress passes a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) that funds the government in FY2020 while it finalizes spending bills. As NAEVR has noted in the past, delayed appropriations have a detrimental effect on the NEI, since the Institute cannot spend in any one month during the CR more than what it spent in the prior fiscal year, as well as a negative impact on researchers, who may need private bridge funding to keep labs open while awaiting federal funding.

Vision Does Well for Fifth Year in BRAIN Initiative

Since the NIH announced on November 2, 2018, the fifth round of new funding awards made with FY2018 funding for the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative, the NEI—one of the ten NIH Institutes whose mission and current research complements the goals of the BRAIN Initiative—has been engaged in analyzing the number and dollar value of awards made to vision within the more than 200 new awards. Since the retina is part of the brain, vision—defined as either NEI funded vision researchers or those studying brain circuitry through the visual route—has done well in all four previous funding cycles, with a total of more than \$150 million in new awards. For FY2018, NEI estimates that “vision” has received 55 grants totaling \$68.2 million or 38% of new award funding, bringing the five-year total of new funding for vision to more than \$220 million.

	FY2013 NET OF SEQUESTER*	FY2014 FINAL^	FY2015 FINAL**	FY2016 FINAL^^	FY2017 FINAL	FY2018 FINAL	FY2019 FINAL	FY2020 HOUSE
NIH	\$29.15 B -5.5%	\$30.07 B +3.5%	\$30.3 B +0.5%	\$32.1 B +6.6%	\$34.08 B +6.2%	\$37.08 B +8.8%	\$39.08 B +5.4%	\$41.08 B +5.1%
NEI	APPROP: \$662.15 M -5.7% OPERATIONAL NET: \$657.1 M	APPROP: \$682.1 M +3% OPERATIONAL NET: \$675.6 M	APPROP: \$684.2 M +0.31% OPERATIONAL NET: \$676.8 M	APPROP: \$715.9 M +4.6% OPERATIONAL NET: \$708 M	APPROP: \$732.6 M +3.5% OPERATIONAL NET: \$731.2 M	APPROP: \$772.3 M +5.6% OPERATIONAL NET: \$770.5 M	APPROP: \$796.5 M +3.1% OPERATIONAL NET: \$793.8 M	\$835.5 M +5%

* NEI appropriated amount is net of \$36 M in sequester cut and \$3.9 M Secretary transfer.

Operational Net reflects \$5.6 M transferred back to NIH Central of the successfully completed Studies of Ocular Complications of AIDS (SOCA) funding.

^ NEI Operational Net reflects \$6.9 M transferred back to NIH Central of SOCA funding and Secretary transfer.

** NEI Operational Net reflects \$7.4 M transferred back to NIH Central of SOCA funding.

^^ NEI Operational Net reflects \$7.9 M transferred back to NIH Central of SOCA funding.

House Passes FY2020 Minibus Spending Bill with NIH/NEI Increases

On June 19, the House passed H.R. 2740, a \$985 billion, four-bill [Defense, Energy and Water, State-Foreign Operations, and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS)] FY2020 spending package by a vote of 226-203. No Republicans voted for the measure, and seven Democrats voted against it. The spending package moved to the Senate, which had not yet begun its work on individual FY2020 spending bills.

The LHHS bill within H.R. 2740, which was reported out of the House Appropriations Committee on May 8, includes a \$2 billion, or a 5.1 percent increase over FY2019, in NIH funding to a level of \$41.08 billion, including the full \$492 million in *21st Century Cures Act* funding for special initiatives (BRAIN, Cancer Moonshot, Precision Medicine, and Regenerative Medicine). It also includes a \$39 million, or a 5 percent increase over FY2019, in NEI funding to a level of \$835.5 million. The bill also maintains the Extramural Salary Cap at Executive Level II (\$192,300 in FY2019).

The week prior to passage and during consideration of amendments to the LHHS bill, the House approved an amendment led by Cong. Mark Pocan (D-WI) that prohibits any funds made available by the bill to convene an Ethics Advisory Board to review research grant applications or current research projects in the NIH's competitive renewal process (Extramural Research) that propose to use human fetal tissue. The amendment was developed in reaction to the Trump Administration's June 5 announcement of policy in which it bans the use of fetal tissue in NIH Intramural Research and subjects Extramural Research using fetal tissue to oversight by an Ethics Advisory Board. NAEVR and ARVO were signatories on a June 12 letter of support to Cong. Pocan and colleagues named on the amendment.

NAEVR Commends House for FY2020 Funding Minibus

On June 20, NAEVR's James Jorkasky issued a statement that read, in part:

“This bill recognizes the importance of funding the important work of the Institutes and Centers (I/Cs), such as the NEI, in addition to the special initiatives mandated by the *21st Century Cures Act*. The five percent inflation-plus-growth NEI increase would continue to rebuild its budget and restore its purchasing power, which had been eroded by flat budgets and lack of inflationary increases prior to the increases in fiscal years 2016 through 2019.”



Researchers Urge Congress to Raise Budget Caps, Robustly Fund NIH/NEI

At the late April/early May ARVO 2019 Annual Meeting in Vancouver, the NAEVR Central Booth served as the “Town Hall” for vision research funding advocacy and education. NAEVR wishes to thank the hundreds of ARVO members who visited and contacted Congress, with the template email letter acknowledging that ARVO had joined with more than 20 other leading scientific societies in urging Congress to pass a bipartisan bill to raise the spending caps. On April 30 and during the ARVO meeting, the House LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee marked up its FY2020 spending bill, which was finalized in the H.R. 2740 minibus (see story above).

NAEVR also answered questions from researchers about the Department of Defense's (DOD) Vision Research Program (VRP) funding, which was addressed at NAEVR's April 29 *Defense-Related Vision Research Opportunities* session that is detailed on the back page of this report.



Sandra Blackwood of member organization International Retinal Research Foundation contacts Congress. In the past, NAEVR has hosted Ms. Blackwood in visits with the Alabama Congressional delegation.