

Legislative Bulletin.....June 16, 2009

Contents:

H.Res.366 — Recognizing the 40th anniversary of the National Eye Institute (NEI) and expressing support for designation of 2010 through 2020 as the “Decade of Vision”

H.Res.366 — Recognizing the 40th anniversary of the National Eye Institute (NEI) and expressing support for designation of 2010 through 2020 as the "Decade of Vision" (*Baldwin, D-WI*)

Order of Business: H.Res.366 is scheduled to be considered on Tuesday, June 16, 2009, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the resolution.

Summary: H.Res.366 would express the sense that the House:

- “Recognizes the 40th anniversary of the National Eye Institute (NEI), commends it for its leadership, and supports its mission to prevent blindness and to save and restore vision;
- “Supports the designation of the ‘Decade of Vision’ to maintain a sustained awareness in the next decade of the unprecedented public health challenges associated with vision impairment and eye disease and to emphasize the need for Federal support for prevention and early detection, access to treatment and rehabilitation, and research; and
- “Commends the National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research (NAEVR), which serves as the ‘Friends of the National Eye Institute’, for its efforts to expand awareness of the incidence and economic burden of eye disease through its Decade of Vision 2010-2020 Initiative.”

The resolution lists a number of findings, including:

- “Vision impairment and eye disease is a major public health problem, especially due to the aging of the population, a disproportionate incidence of eye disease in minority populations, and vision loss as a result of diabetes and other chronic diseases, which costs the Nation \$68,000,000,000 annually in health care costs, lost productivity, reduced independence, diminished quality of life, increased depression, and accelerated mortality;

- “With wisdom and foresight, Congress passed the National Eye Institute (NEI) Act (Public Law 90-489), which was signed into law by President Johnson on August 16, 1968, with the NEI holding the first meeting of its National Advisory Eye Council (NAEC) on April 3, 1969;
- “The NEI maximizes Federal funding by devoting 85 percent of its budget to extramural research that addresses the breadth of eye and vision disorders, including ‘back of the eye’ retinal and optic nerve disease, such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy, and concomitant low vision, and ‘front of the eye’ disease, including corneal, lens, cataract, and refractive errors;
- “The NEI has been a leader in clinical research, funding more than 60 clinical trials, including a series of Diabetic Retinopathy Clinical Trials Networks, in association with the National Institute for Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disorders (NIDDK), which have developed treatment strategies that have been determined by the NEI to be 90 percent effective and save an estimated \$1,600,000,000 per year in blindness and vision impairment disability costs;
- “Federal support at the NEI and related Department of Health and Human Services agencies is essential for the prevention and early detection, access to treatment and rehabilitation, and research associated with vision impairment and eye disease.”

Additional Background: The National Eye Institute (NEI) was established by Congress in 1968 to conduct research into eye diseases and otherwise help improve the vision of Americans. As part of the federal government’s National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Eye Institute’s mission is to “conduct and support research, training, health information dissemination, and other programs with respect to blinding eye diseases, visual disorders, mechanisms of visual function, preservation of sight, and the special health problems and requirements of the blind.”

For more information on NEI, visit here: <http://www.nei.nih.gov/>.

Committee Action: H.Res.366 was introduced on April 27, 2009, and referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, which took no official action.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution does not authorize expenditures.

Does the Bill Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?: No.

Does the Bill Contain Any New State-Government, Local-Government, or Private-Sector Mandates?: No.

RSC Staff Contact: Emily Henehan; 202-225-9286; emily.henehan@mail.house.gov