

H. Res. 981

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,

April 22, 2008.

Whereas glaucoma is a progressive disease of the optic nerve, robbing individuals of both peripheral and central vision;

Whereas glaucoma affects all age groups, including infants, children, and the elderly;

Whereas glaucoma disproportionately affects underserved minority populations, with African-Americans having a three times greater risk of developing this disease than White Americans, and it is the leading cause of irreversible vision loss in African-Americans and Hispanics;

Whereas glaucoma is the second leading cause of preventable vision loss in the United States, afflicting 2,200,000 Americans, and it is the leading cause of permanent blindness worldwide, afflicting 67,000,000 persons;

Whereas awareness is absolutely crucial, as glaucoma often has no symptoms until vision loss occurs, and it is estimated that, in the United States, more than half of the individuals with glaucoma are unaware that they have it and, in developing countries, 90 percent of individuals with glaucoma are unaware that they have it;

Whereas with early diagnosis and ongoing treatment, 90 percent of the cases where blindness occurs can be avoided and awareness is crucial, so that individuals with known

risk factors for glaucoma and those over the age of 40 should have regular, comprehensive eye examinations that include careful evaluation of the optic nerve and measurement of eye pressure;

Whereas the National Eye Institute (“NEI”) within the National Institutes of Health (“NIH”) has been a worldwide leader in glaucoma research, elucidating the genetic basis of different types of the disease (including risk factors) and the potential for gene therapy approaches, identifying factors that can protect the optic nerve from damage, evaluating the potential for optic nerve cell regeneration, and better understanding how elevated intraocular pressure leads to optic nerve damage and how pressure-reducing drugs ultimately developed from NEI-led research can reduce glaucoma progression;

Whereas it is the role of the NEI to support research to prevent, diagnose, and cure glaucoma-related vision impairment and blindness, which disproportionately affects underserved minority populations; and

Whereas the public needs to know the insidious nature of glaucoma, that there are means for detecting and treating it to save sight, and the importance of compliance associated with those treatments, and the first-ever World Glaucoma Day is an observance planned to increase global awareness in that regard: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the United States House of Representatives—

- (1) recognizes the first-ever World Glaucoma Day;
- (2) supports the efforts of the National Eye Institute within the National Institutes of Health to continue

research on the causes of glaucoma, including genetic and environmental risk factors, glaucoma prevention, the relationships between damage to the optic nerve and loss of vision, societal and individual impacts, diagnostics, and treatment to save and potentially restore sight; and

(3) congratulates the American Glaucoma Society for its efforts to expand awareness of the prevalence and economic burden of glaucoma.

Attest:

Clerk.