

Mr. Chairman, a Gallup poll recently indicated that the American citizen fears the loss of his sight second among all other medical disasters. Yet in this 20th century, 30,000 of our citizens experience that tragedy every year, to say nothing of the 450,000 in our Nation who have already done so. Another three and a half million Americans also suffer from serious noncorrectable visual defects which are not entirely blinding. This, at a time in civilization when man is more and more dependent upon his sight for work, pleasure, and intellectual development.

We have made great strides in the rehabilitation of the blind and in providing talking books and many other marvelous aids. But nothing we can do after the fact can ever take the place of prevention. Prevention, however, can remain only a dream unless we untangle the mysteries of the diseases of the eye and apply our new knowledge effectively. This is possible only if the climate is right and the required resources are available to foster the highest quality of research. I believe that the proposed legislation is a new and timely step toward this end.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. JARMAN. Thank you, Mr. Brasco.

Our next witness will be the Honorable Leonard Farbstein, also of New York. Please proceed Mr. Farbstein.

STATEMENT OF HON. LEONARD FARBSTEIN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. FARBSTEIN. Mr. Chairman, I welcome this opportunity to appear before you today in support of legislation creating a National Eye Institute in the National Institutes of Health. I support this legislation because, in my opinion, it will provide the organizational framework within which a major attack can be launched against visual disorders and blindness.

Legislation creating a National Eye Institute has been proposed by a number of Congressmen in both the House and the Senate. I, myself, introduced such a bill, H.R. 6116, on February 27, 1967. I believe it has become clear to many Members of the Congress that it is time to mobilize our efforts, to place top priority on combating the problems of eye diseases, the fear of which ranks second only to cancer among the American population.

To justify this legislation as critical to any overall public health program, one has only to examine the dimensions of the problem. Nearly 90 million Americans, or almost half of our Nation's population, have some form of eye trouble. In three out of every four American homes, one or more persons must wear glasses. More than 1 million persons are unable to read regular newspaper print even with the aid of glasses. These are startling statistics for they indicate that eye disorders are a nationwide health problem that demands our immediate attention.

To counter such tragic afflictions, the National Eye Institute will be responsible for coordinating preventive programs, conducting medical research and training personnel.

Prevention, of course, is basic to any responsible public program. This year alone more than 30,000 men, women, and children will lose their eyesight. It is important to note, though, that contrary to pop-