

## December 10, 2007 - Murtha Named "2007 Man of Vision" by Schepens Eye Research Institute

Boston, MA--Schepens Eye Research Institute has named Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, this year's Man of Vision for his advocacy on behalf of veterans blinded by war and for research to restore their vision.

Its highest honor, each year the Institute gives the Man of Vision Award to an individual who has made lasting contributions to vision research and the awareness of the challenges of vision loss. Among previous awardees have been jazz legend Ella Fitzgerald, journalist and Time Magazine's managing editor Henry Grunwald, and Boston philanthropist Dick Harte.

For more than 30 years, Murtha has pushed for medical research partnerships that target the specific needs of war fighters and veterans. Most recently, his initiatives have helped the Department of Defense respond proactively to the increasing number of eye injuries suffered by American soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In accepting the award, Murtha said, "We owe our troops more than just a debt of gratitude. We owe them the best care this country has to offer, today and in the future. Investing in vision research is an important part of making sure we can offer the care they need." Massachusetts Congressman Jim McGovern, an avid Schepens supporter, was on hand for the award presentation. Congressmen Mike Capuano and Stephen Lynch, who have long been champions of Schepens' vision research, intended to also participate in the presentation, but were unable to do so.

Experts estimate that between 16 and 20 percent of returning soldiers have eye injuries, and many of those with traumatic brain injuries are also experiencing vision complications. Much higher than in previous wars, the incidence of eye injuries has been the result of the wide use of Improvised Explosive Devices and advanced armor technology that saves lives by shielding the body's core, but does little to protect the face and extremities.

Well-respected for his firsthand knowledge of military and defense issues, Murtha has been a trusted adviser to presidents of both political parties. In response to the flood of military eye injuries seen at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Murtha initiated a research partnership between the Department of Defense and Schepens Eye Research Institute, the country's largest eye research institute. The success of this partnership--which stimulated study of issues ranging from

nerve regeneration to enhanced heads-up displays to warn soldiers in the battlefield--has encouraged DoD to build a vision research program, which now includes additional partners from around the country.

"With Congressman Murtha's encouragement and leadership, we have been able to show that nerve regeneration is, in fact, possible," notes Dr. Michael S. Gilmore, President and CEO of Schepens and Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School.

"This work, which has been funded through his efforts, is exciting scientifically, and opens the way for new treatments not only for optic nerves and retinas damaged in combat, but also for veterans who have suffered spinal and brain injuries on the battlefield."

For additional information on Schepens Eye Research Institute contact Patti Jacobs or visit [www.schepens.harvard.edu](http://www.schepens.harvard.edu).

Schepens Eye Research Institute is an affiliate of Harvard Medical School and the largest independent eye research institute in the nation.

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