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**“EYES ON CAPITOL HILL” EVENT BROUGHT TOGETHER  
CITIZENS AFFECTED BY VISION LOSS AND  
GOVERNMENT LEADERS**

***Prevent Blindness America Held Three-day Event to Educate  
Policymakers on the Impact of Eye Disease and Eye Accidents***

**CHICAGO (March 5, 2009)** – Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s leading volunteer eye health and safety organization, held the fourth annual “Eyes on Capitol Hill” event, in Washington, D.C., March 2-4. The annual program provides participants the opportunity to meet with their own government leaders and share their personal experiences with vision loss. Prevent Blindness America arranged more than 100 appointments with congressional and senate offices in an effort to provide policymakers the opportunity to discuss the importance of funding vision health programs for their constituents.

“We understand that there are many worthy causes today that need substantial federal and state-funding support,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America. “What we want to impress upon our policymakers is that funding preventive programs today, like vision screenings and follow-up care, actually saves money in the long run.”

Half of all blindness is preventable through early detection and treatment. The key is that adults and children have access to quality vision health programs and care. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately only one in three children in America have received eye care services before their sixth birthday. And, the recent study by Prevent Blindness America, *The Economic Impact of Vision Problems: The Toll of Major Adult Eye Disorders, Visual Impairment, and Blindness on the U.S. Economy*, estimated the costs associated with adult vision problems in the United States at \$51.4 billion annually. This staggering number will only increase as the baby boomer population continues to age.

“For the fourth year in a row, the Eyes on Capitol Hill event has been a complete success and we certainly could not have done it without the willingness of citizens across the country to come to Washington, D.C. and speak on behalf of those everywhere who have been touched by sight-threatening issues,” added Parry. “Of course, we would also like to thank all of our congressmen, senators and their staff members for opening their doors to us and listening to our message. And special thanks to our sponsors, Pfizer, Inc. and VSP Vision Care, for their continued support.”

Moving forward, Prevent Blindness America has drafted a public policy agenda for the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress that seeks to:

- Advance and expand public health efforts to promote eye health and prevent eye disease, vision loss and blindness
- Ensure comprehensive vision care for all Americans

As part of the agenda, Prevent Blindness America is asking for an increase in funding for the CDC's Vision Health Initiative. The initiative is designed to address the growing public health threat of preventable vision loss among older Americans, low-income and underserved populations. Prevent Blindness America is also asking for support of the National Eye Institute (NEI) through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to bolster efforts to provide vision research and vision care programs.

For more information on Eyes on Capitol Hill, information on how you can contact your state representative to ask for their support on vision-related issues, or to review a copy of the Prevent Blindness America Public Policy Agenda for the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, please call Prevent Blindness America at (800) 331-2020 or visit [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org).

### **About Prevent Blindness America**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screenings, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call (800) 331-2020 or visit us on the Web at [preventblindness.org](http://preventblindness.org).

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