

Mr. CHAMBLISS: Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Eye Bank Association of America, the Georgia Eye Bank, and the recognition of March as “National Eye Donor Month.”

Eye Banks today provide for more than 50,000 corneal grafts for transplantation each year. In Georgia alone, citizens donated enough ocular tissue to provide over 1,200 corneas to their fellow Georgians. The generosity of these donors allows for better eye care and the gift of improved sight for those lucky enough to receive transplants.

The Eye Bank Association of America is the oldest transplant association in the United States and has restored sight to nearly 1 million individuals. The Association was created in 1955 when 12 eye banks formed with the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology. Since 1961, more than 600,000 corneal transplants have been performed, restoring the sight of men, women, and children ranging from 9 days to 107 years old. This year, I am proud to commend Bruce Varnum, Chair of the Eye Bank Association of America, from my home state of Georgia, for his excellent service and commitment to advancing eye transplantation and donation.

Corneal blindness can develop from a variety of diseases, injuries, or infections. These transplants have over a 90 percent success rate and give renewed hope for those in need of a new beginning.

Despite these encouraging numbers, many Americans are still left waiting in the dark. I urge my colleagues and all Americans to consider becoming eye donors to allow for the miracle of sight that so many of us take for granted. By working with the National Eye Banks Association and local eye banks, we involve ourselves in the selfless and kindhearted spirit that defines the American people. The role of eye donors is paramount in assisting those who have tragically lost the ability to see.

Mr. President, lawmakers have recognized March as National Eye Donor since President Reagan proclaimed the first one in 1983 and I am honored on behalf of the residents of Georgia and those throughout the country to recognize March as National Eye Donor Month. I yield the floor.