Legislative Agenda for the 115th Congress

updated July 2017

AVMA’s Governmental Relations Division (GRD) advocates the association’s policies and positions on federal legislative and regulatory issues that influence animal and human health and advance the veterinary medical profession. This document includes a list of key federal legislation, organized by issue area, which the GRD is monitoring for the 115th Congress (Jan. 2017-Jan 2019).
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Resources

AVMA’s Legislative Scoring System

The AVMA prioritizes how it will address bills or regulations when they are posed in Congress. The scoring system uses the following three rankings:

- **Support** – This means that the AVMA supports the bill and may expend resources to advance the bill through the legislative process.
- **Non-support** – This means that the AVMA opposes the bill and may expend resources to defeat the bill through the legislative process. If applicable and appropriate, AVMA may identify areas of the bill that would need to be changed for support of the bill to be a consideration.
- **Monitor** – This means that the AVMA has reviewed the bill, but has not taken a position. The Governmental Relations Division staff will continue to monitor the legislation and advise AVMA’s Legislative Advisory Committee should the legislation’s status change.

AVMA Governmental Relations Division Contacts

Below is the contact information for AVMA’s Governmental Relations Division staff:

- Dr. Kent McClure, Chief Governmental Relations Officer, 800-321-1473, kmclure@avma.org
- Dr. Mark Lutschauhnig, Director, 800-321-1473 ext. 3205, mlutschauhnig@avma.org
- Gina Luke, Assistant Director, 800-321-1473 ext. 3204, gluke@avma.org
- Dr. Lauren Stump, Assistant Director, 800-321-1473 ext. 3211, lstump@avma.org
## Issue Areas

### Federal Appropriations Fiscal Year 2018

AVMA seeks funding for an array of federal programs and agencies that directly impact veterinary medicine, animal health and welfare, food safety, disease surveillance, public health, and research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program/Agency</th>
<th>Final FY17</th>
<th>AVMA recommendation</th>
<th>House bill</th>
<th>Senate Bill</th>
<th>Final FY18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (USDA/NIFA)</td>
<td>$6.5 million</td>
<td>$6.5 million</td>
<td>$6.5 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Services Grant Program (USDA/NIFA)</td>
<td>$2.5 million</td>
<td>$3 million</td>
<td>$2.5 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (USDA/NIFA)</td>
<td>$1.25 million</td>
<td>$2.5 million</td>
<td>$1.25 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Health and Disease Research (USDA/NIFA)</td>
<td>$4 million</td>
<td>$10 million</td>
<td>$4 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative (USDA/NIFA)</td>
<td>$8 million</td>
<td>$10 million</td>
<td>$8 million</td>
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<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Food Research Institute (USDA/NIFA)</td>
<td>$350 million</td>
<td>$420 million</td>
<td>$375 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural Research Service (USDA/ARS)</td>
<td>$1.17 billion</td>
<td>$1.286 billion</td>
<td>$1.13 billion</td>
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<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS)</td>
<td>$934 million</td>
<td>$950 million</td>
<td>$906.4 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Animal Health Laboratory Network (USDA/APHIS and NIFA)</td>
<td>$16.3 million</td>
<td>$30 million</td>
<td>$16.3 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Animal Health Monitoring System (USDA/APHIS)</td>
<td>$10.5 million</td>
<td>$10.5 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Protection Act enforcement (USDA/APHIS)</td>
<td>$697,000</td>
<td>$705,000</td>
<td>$700,000</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA/FSIS)</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>PHV R&amp;R report language</td>
<td>$1.032 billion</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Veterinary Medicine (HHS/FDA/CVM)</td>
<td>$162.852 million</td>
<td>$187.825 million</td>
<td>$187.825 million</td>
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<td>TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (HHS-CVM)</td>
<td>$10.8 million</td>
<td>$11 million</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institutes of Health (HHS/NIH)</td>
<td>$34.1 billion</td>
<td>$36.1 billion</td>
<td>$35 billion</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Status:** On July 12, the House Appropriations Committee passed by voice vote its fiscal 2018 Agriculture appropriations bill. The agriculture spending bill now awaits further action by the full chamber. On July 13, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Humans Services, and Education advanced its bill to the full committee along a party-line vote, 9-6. The spending bill is expected to have a full committee markup on July 19.

**Coalitions:** To boost funding, AVMA collaborates with the Animal Agriculture Coalition, National Coalition for Food & Agriculture Research, Supporters of Agricultural Research, the AFRI Coalition, the Friends of ARS, the National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science, U.S. Stakeholder Forum on Antimicrobial Resistance, the Adhoc Group for Medical Research, the Coalition on Biodefense & Public Health Preparedness, and Wildlife Services Coalition.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke
**Animal Health and Welfare Issues**

**H.R. 113 Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act of 2017**

The legislation amends Sect. 302 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FDCA) so that equine parts would be deemed unsafe under Sect. 409 (Food Additives) and 512 (New Animal Drugs) of the Act. The bill prohibits the knowing sale or transport of equines or equine parts in interstate or foreign commerce. Equine raised in the U.S. are frequently treated with substances that are not approved for horses intended for human consumption and equine parts are therefore unsafe within the meaning of sect. 409 of the FDCA; and equines raised in the U.S. are frequently treated with drugs, including phenylbutazone, acepromazine, boldenone undecylenate, omeprazole, ketoprofen, xylazine, hyaluronic acid, nitrofurazone, polysulfated glycosaminoglycan, clenbuterol, tolazoline, and ponazuril, which are not approved for use in horses intended for human consumption and equine parts are therefore unsafe within the meaning of sect. 512 of the FDCA.

**Status:** Rep. Vern Buchanan [R-FL-16] introduced H.R. 113 on Jan. 25, 2017, and was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health and House Committee on Agriculture Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture.

**AVMA Position:** Nonsupport  
**Primary Contact:** Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

**H.R. 909 / S. 322, Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act**

This legislation broadens the definition of stalking to include conduct that causes a person to experience a reasonable fear of death or serious bodily injury to his or her pet. Additionally, an interstate violation of a protection order includes interstate travel with the intent to violate a protection order against a pet that is included within the scope of the protection order. The bill specifies the applicable criminal penalty—a prison term of up to five years, a fine, or both—for a person who commits an interstate violation of a protection order against a pet. A defendant who commits a domestic violence offense or an interstate violation of a protection order, mandatory restitution in the "full amount of victim's losses" includes costs incurred for veterinary services related to the pet. The Department of Agriculture is directed to award grants for shelter and housing assistance and support services for domestic violence victims with pets. Finally, states should include, in domestic violence protection orders, protections against violence or threats against a person's pet.

**Status:** H.R 909 was introduced by Rep. Katharine Clark (D-MA-5) on Feb. 7, 2017 and it referred to House Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations; and the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture.

**Status:** S. 322 was introduced by Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI) on Feb. 7, 2017 and then referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

**AVMA Position:** Support  
**Primary Contact:** Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

**H.R. 1243 Battlefield Excellence through Superior Training (BEST) Practices Act**

H.R. 1243 requires the Secretary of Defense, no later than: (1) Oct. 1, 2018, to develop, test, and validate human-based training methods for training members of the Armed Forces in the treatment of combat trauma injuries, with the goal of replacing live animal-based training methods; and (2) Oct. 1, 2022, to use only use human-based training methods for such purposes. Prohibits the use of animals in such training thereafter.

**Status:** H.R. 1243 was introduced by Rep. Hank Johnson (D-GA-4th) on Feb. 28, 2017 and referred to the House Committee on Armed Services; Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities.

**AVMA Position:** Support  
**Primary Contact:** Dr. Mark Lutschaunig
H.R. 1338 Horse Protection Amendments Act
This legislation amends the Horse Protection Act to create one governing body, the Horse Industry Organization, to manage the inspection and penalty process against “soring” horses throughout the walking horse show industry. The bill places requirements on how and which individuals are appointed to the single HIO board. It also changes what inspection methods can be used and what they can include.

Status: Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-Tenn.-4) introduced H.R. 1338 on Mar. 2, 2017 and it was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1847 Prevent all Soring Tactics (PAST) Act
The legislation amends the Horse Protection Act (HPA) to designate additional unlawful acts with regard to the practice of soring horses. It also strengthens penalties for violations and improves USDA enforcement. Specific provisions include: defining an "action device" as any boot, collar, chain, roller, or other device that encircles or is placed upon the lower extremity of the leg of a horse; clarifying that the term "management" includes the sponsoring organization and the event manager; creating a penalty structure that requires horses to be disqualified for an increasing period of time based on the number of violations (from 180 days up to three years); requiring the USDA to license, train, assign and oversee inspectors who enforce the HPA; making the actual act of soring illegal and/or directing another person to cause a horse to become sore illegal; prohibiting the use of action devices on any limb of Tennessee Walking Horses, Spotted Saddle Horses, or Racking Horses at horse shows, exhibitions, sales or auctions; banning the use of weighted shoes, pads, wedges, hoof bands, or other devices that are not strictly protective or therapeutic in nature; increasing civil and criminal penalties for violators; requiring a period of time where show horses are banned from participating in shows, exhibitions, sales or auctions for one or more violations; and disqualifying violators permanently upon their third or higher violation.

Status: Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.-3) introduced H.R. 1847 on Mar. 30, 2017, and it was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

AVMA Position: Support Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1494 / S. 654 Preventing Animal Cruelty and Torture (PACT) Act
This legislation amends the federal criminal code to prohibit intentionally engaging in animal crushing in or affecting interstate or foreign commerce or within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the U.S. Current law only prohibits knowingly creating or distributing an animal crush video. Also, the legislation adds exceptions for conduct that is for predator or pest control, medical or scientific research, or necessary to protect the life or property of a person from a serious threat caused by an animal.

Status: H.R. 1494 was introduced by Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX-21) on Mar. 10, 2017, and was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

Status: S. 654 was introduced by Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA) on Mar. 15, 2017, and was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

AVMA Position: Support Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig
H.R. 1141 Pet Safety and Protection Act
This legislation amends the Animal Welfare Act to list permissible sources of dogs and cats used by research facilities to include dogs and cats obtained: 1) from a licensed dealer, 2) from a publicly owned and operated pound or shelter that meets specific requirements, 3) by donation from a person who bred and raised the dog or cat and owned it for no less than one year, or 4) from a research facility licensed by the Secretary of Agriculture. It prohibits dealers from selling or otherwise providing any research facility with random-source dogs or cats unless specified requirements are met.


AVMA Position: Nonsupport Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1438 Refuge from Cruel Trapping
This legislation amends the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 to prohibit the use or possession of body-gripping traps in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Status: H.R. 1438 was introduced by Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY-17th) on Mar. 8, 2017 and was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources, referred to the Subcommittee on Federal Lands.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1759 Traveling Exotic Animal and Public Safety Protection Act
This legislation amends the Animal Welfare Act to restrict the use of exotic and wild animals in traveling performances. The legislation states that Congress finds that conditions inherent to traveling performances subject exotic and wild animals to compromised welfare and chronic stress, and present public and worker health and safety risks not adequately addressed by current regulation. The bill includes several findings related to public, worker, and animal safety as well as cruelty and oversight. The legislation prohibits any performance or participation of an exotic or wild animal in a traveling animal act. H.R. 1759 does not apply to non-mobile, permanent institutions; environmental education programs by accredited facilities, if used for no more than 6 months in any year, no more than 12 hours per day; use by a university, college, laboratory, or other research facility registered with the Secretary; use in film or television if live animal exhibition before a live audience is not used; use in a rodeo; domestic or farm animals.

Status: H.R. 1759 was introduced by Rep. Raul M. Grijalva (D-AZ-3) on April 11, 2017 and referred to the House Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1818 Big Cat Public Safety
This legislation would amend the Lacey Act to clarify provisions enacted by the Captive Wildlife Safety Act. Specifically, it prohibits any person to import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce, or in a manner substantially affecting interstate or foreign commerce, or to breed or possess, any prohibited wildlife species.

Status: H.R. 1818 was introduced by Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA-10) on Mar. 30, 2017 and was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig
**H.Res. 133 National Pet Adoption Day**
This resolution expresses support for the designations of a National Pet Adoption Day and Month. The resolution requests that the President issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe “National Pet Adoption Day” and “National Pet Adoption Month.” Finally, the resolution encourages the people of the United States to adopt pets from local animal shelters and rescues.

**Status:** H.Res. 133 was introduced by Rep. Roger Williams (R-TX-25) on Feb. 26, 2017 and referred to House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

**AVMA Position:** Support  
**Primary Contact:** Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

**H.Con.Res. 46 National Purebred Dog Day**
This resolution expresses support for the designation of a “National Purebred Dog Day” as there is no such congressionally designated day; declares purebred dogs are living legacies that serve many functions through work and companionship; purebred dogs have been of enormous help to medical science; all dogs regardless of their heritage should be valued; the purpose-bred dog should be cherished and preserved, and each breed is etched in cultural history.

**Status:** H.Con.Res. 46 was introduced by Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL-3) on Apr. 4, 2017 and was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

**AVMA Position:** Support  
**Primary Contact:** Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

**Food-Related Issues**

**H.R. 677, CBRN Intelligence and Information Sharing Act of 2017**
This legislation amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish intelligence and information sharing in the Office of Intelligence Analysis in the Department of Homeland Security related to the possible use of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents as well as supporting intelligence analysis related global infectious disease, public health, food, agricultural, and veterinary issues. In addition, the legislation provides for sharing information and providing support to state, and tribal authorities, other federal agencies and other relevant national biosecurity and biodefense stakeholders.

**Status:** Rep. Martha McSally (R-Arizona-2) introduced H.R. 677 on Jan. 24, 2017 and it was referred to the House Committee on Homeland Security. H.R. 677 was considered under suspension of the rules and passes the house on Jan. 31, 2017. It was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

**AVMA Position:** Support  
**Primary Contact:** Dr. Lauren Stump

**H.R. 1238 / S. 500, Securing Our Agriculture and Food Act**
The legislation amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to make the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Health Affairs responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) related to food, agriculture, and veterinary defense against terrorism. The legislation requires coordination of DHS’s efforts on defending United States food, agriculture, and veterinary systems against terrorism and other high-consequence events that pose a high risk to homeland security. The legislation specifies it may not be construed as altering or superseding the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture relating to food and agriculture. This bill specifically affirms the importance of veterinary medicine and veterinarians in defense against bio- and agro-terrorism.
**Status:** H.R. 1238 was introduced on Feb. 28, 2017 by Rep. David Young (R-IA-3) and referred to the House Homeland Security Committee, House Agriculture Committee, and House Energy and Commerce. H.R. 1238 was reported favorably out of the House Homeland Security Committee unamended on Mar. 8, 2017 and passed in the House on Mar. 22, 2017. H.R. 1238 was sent to the Senate where it was referred to the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs. The committee discharged the bill, and it passed the Senate with amendments by unanimous consent. The House agreed to the Senate amendments, and it was signed by the President on June 30, 2017 (P.L. 115-43).

S. 500 was introduced on Mar. 2, 2017 by Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) and was referred to the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

**S. 616, Food Security is National Security Act**

This legislation amends section 721 of the Defense Production Act of 1950 to include the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Health and Human Services as members of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States and to require the Committee to consider the security of the food and agriculture systems of the United States as a factor to be considered when determining to take action with respect to foreign investment.

**Status:** S. 616 was introduced by Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) on Mar. 14, 2017 and was referred to the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke

**Pharmaceutical Issues**

**H.R. 623, Fairness to Pet Owners Act**

This legislation is purported to promote competition and help consumers save money by giving them the freedom to choose where they buy prescription pet medications. Veterinarians would be required to provide pet owners with a copy of their pet’s prescription, whether or not requested and prior to offering to fill or dispense the medication. The veterinarian may not require payment for the prescription, require the pet owner to sign a waiver or disclaim liability.

**Status:** Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah-3) introduced H.R. 623 on Jan. 24, 2017 and it was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

**AVMA Position:** Nonsupport

**Primary Contact:** Dr. Lauren Stump

**Resources:** For more information see AVMA’s advocacy campaign page, “Prescription writing mandate is unnecessary for veterinarians.”

**H.R. 1587, Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA)**

This legislation would amend the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to to preserve the effectiveness of medically important antimicrobials used in the treatment of human and animal diseases. The bill would require drug manufacturers that hold approvals for animal drugs that are medically important antimicrobials to demonstrate with reasonable certainty that no harm to human health will be caused due to the development of antimicrobial resistance attributable to certain uses of that particular drug. The bill defines therapeutic use of antimicrobials in food animals as only for the specific purpose of treating an animal with a documented disease or infection.

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Status: Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.-25) introduced H.R. 1587 on Mar. 17, 2017, and it was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee’s Subcommittee on Health.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

primary Contact: Dr. Lauren Stump

S. 629, Preventing Antibiotic Resistance Act (PARA) of 2017

This bill amends the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to require the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to refuse a new animal drug application if the drug is a medically important antimicrobial (used to treat humans) and the applicant fails to demonstrate that the drug meets specified criteria for use in animals, including that: 1) the drug is effective, 2) the drug is targeted to animals at risk of developing a specific bacterial disease, 3) the drug has a defined duration of therapy, and 4) there is reasonable certainty of no harm to human health from microbial resistance to the drug. Sponsors of certain medically important antimicrobials already approved for use in food-producing animals would be required to submit evidence to the FDA that demonstrates that their drug meets the criteria described above for approved indications. The FDA would also be required to withdraw approval for any indication for which the FDA determines there is insufficient evidence that the drug meets the criteria. This bill expresses the sense of the Senate that a veterinarian-client-patient relationship should ensure that medically important antimicrobials are used in food-producing animals in a manner consistent with best practices.


AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Lauren Stump

Research Issues

AVMA advocates for federal appropriations in support of agricultural research at U.S. Department of Agriculture and biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health. Additionally, AVMA supports efforts to ensure facilities and administrative (F&A) reimbursements are sufficient to cover a portion of a Colleges of Veterinary Medicine’s infrastructure and operations costs related to federally-funded research. F&A costs, commonly referred to as indirect costs, encompass: the maintenance of sophisticated, high-tech laboratories and research facilities; utilities such as lighting and heating; hazardous waste disposal; data-storage; information technology and internet services; and the administrative support required to comply with various federal, state, and local regulations and reporting requirements. Historically, the federal government has partnered with universities to pay for these critical and necessary research expenses, just as it does when it contracts with industry or utilizes its own federal laboratories to conduct research.

Small Business Issues

H.R. 1101, Small Business Health Fairness Act

This legislation amends the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) to establish association health plans (AHPs) and establishes requirements relating to certification, sponsors and boards of trustees, participation and coverage, nondiscrimination, contribution rates, and voluntary termination. AHPs offering benefits that are not health insurance must: 1) establish and maintain sufficient reserves and stop-loss insurance to cover those benefits, and 2) make annual payments to a fund to be used to pay for stop-loss insurance for such AHPs for which there is a reasonable expectation that claims would not be satisfied without such insurance. AHPs that fail to meet these requirements are subject to termination. The Department of Labor must establish a Solvency Standards Working Group. States may tax contributions to AHPs, with certain conditions. The legislation preempts state laws that preclude health insurers from: 1) offering health insurance in
connection with a certified AHP; or 2) offering health insurance of the same policy type to other employers in the state that are eligible for coverage under AHPs.

**Status:** H.R. 1101, introduced by Rep. Sam Johnson (R-TX-3), passed by a vote of 236-175 in the U.S. House of Representatives on Mar. 22, 2017 and was then sent to the U.S. Senate for consideration on Mar. 23. It was referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke

**Employer Recruitment & Retention Tools:** H.R. 795, Employer Participation in Student Loan Assistance Act / S. 796, Employer Participation in Repayment Act

AVMA supports giving employers a recruitment and retention tool that ultimately reduces educational debt. Under the bill employers would be permitted to give employees up to $5,250/year towards repayment of student loans. The employer would get a tax break while employees would not be taxed on the money. Absent the tax benefit any help an employer were to give an employee would be considered compensation.

**Status:** H.R. 795 was introduced by Rep. Rodney Davis (R-IL-13) was introduced on Feb. 1, 2017 and was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

**Status:** S. 796 was introduced by Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) on March 30, 2017 and was referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke

**H.R. 2193, Remote Transactions Parity Act / S. 976, Marketplace Fairness Act**

This legislation grants States authority to enforce State and local sales and use tax laws on remote transactions. AVMA supports e-fairness legislation because it impacts the bottom line of veterinary practices. Online retailers selling pet medications, products or equipment have a built-in advantage of as much as 10% over brick-and-mortar businesses simply because they do not collect legally owed sales taxes. Ad addition, uncollected taxes result in the loss of revenue for states to support public services including higher education.

**Status:** H.R. 2193 was introduced by Rep. Kristi Noem (R-SD-At Large) on Apr. 27, 2017 and was referred to the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law.

**Status:** S. 976 was introduced by Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) on Apr. 27, 2017 and was referred to the Senate Finance Committee, and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke

**Overtime Pay & Exempt Employees**

Before an adjustment is made for exempt salaried employees, AVMA is urging congress to require the DOL to conduct a full and complete economic analysis on small businesses and nonprofit employers. The Trump Administration has opted not to defend the Department of Labor’s (DOL) overtime rule for exempt salaried employees. The rule would make exempt employees earning less than $47,476 annually qualified for time-and-a-half when they work more than 40 hours a week. The current threshold to qualify for overtime pay for these workers is $23,476. The overtime regulation was last adjusted in 2004.

**AVMA Position:** Monitoring issue

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke
Tax Issues

H.R. 1268 / S. 487, Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act
AVMA supports legislation exempting Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program awards and similar State-administered for veterinarians from a 39% withholding tax has been introduced for the last three congresses. AVMA urges congress to pass this important legislation which will directly help rural America gain access to needed veterinary services for livestock and public health. The cost per award over an initial three-year contract is $104,250 ($75,000 for the loan repayment award and $29,250 for withholding taxes). Between 2010 and 2016, USDA has offered 388 VMLRP awards to veterinarians; meanwhile nearly 1,200 veterinarians have applied to the program. VMLRP veterinarians now practice in 46 states, Puerto Rico and on U.S. federal lands.

Status: H.R. 2193 was introduced by Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE-3) with Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI-3) on Mar. 1, 2017 and was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Status: S. 487 was introduced by Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) with Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) on Mar. 1, 2017 and was referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

AVMA Position: Support
Primary Contact: Gina Luke

S. 405 / H.R. 1659, Stop Taxing Death and Disability Act
This legislation would exclude loan forgiveness from death or disability, including the Total and Permanent Disability loan discharge, from the calculation of gross income for income tax purposes.

Status: S. 405 was introduced by Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del) on Feb. 16, 2017 and was referred to the Senate Finance.

Status: H.R. 1659 was introduced by Peter Roskam (R-IL-6) on Mar. 21, 2017 and was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee, and the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

AVMA Position: Support
Primary Contact: Gina Luke

Veterinary Professional and Educational Issues

AVMA recognizes that educational debt can be a significant burden on aspiring veterinarians and early career veterinarians and it has broader implications for the veterinary profession. AVMA is focused on ameliorating shortcomings in the federal student aid system as congress works to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. To that end, AVMA is seeking to advance legislation to: 1) abolish origination fees; 2) reinstate subsidized Stafford Loan for health professions students; 3) lower interest rates on federal student loans; 4) maintain federal student loan limits for health professions students; 5) establish a federal refinancing option; 6) increase awareness and participation in income-driven repayment plans; 7) maintain the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program; 8) increase financial literacy; and (9) establish eligibility for grants and scholarships.

H.R. 159, Wildlife Veterinarians Employment and Training Act (Wildlife VET Act)
This legislation aims to expand the workforce of veterinarians specialized in the care and conservation of wild animals through developing educational programs focused on wildlife and zoological veterinary medicine; creating newly funded positions for wildlife and zoo clinical and research veterinarians; establishing a loan repayment program for veterinary students going into wildlife or zoological medicine; providing incentives to study and practice wildlife and zoological veterinary medicine; helping colleges of veterinary medicine develop curricula to train students in the health management of wildlife in their natural environment and in captivity; and by expanding the number of educational and training programs in wildlife and zoological medicine.
**Status:** H.R. 159 was introduced by Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-Fla-20) on Jan. 3, 2017 and was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands and the Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans; in addition to the House Agriculture Committee’s Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke

**H.R. 1635, Empowering Students Through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act**

This legislation would change the current one-time entrance counseling requirement for federal student loans and Pell Grants into an annual counseling requirement.

**Status:** H.R. 1635 was introduced by Rep. Bret Guthrie (R-Ky-2) on Mar. 20, 2017 and was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke

**H.R. 1429, Letter of Estimated Annual Debt for Students (LEADS) Act**

This legislation would require schools to provide students with annual notices of student loan borrowing amounts. The notice would also include the cumulative balance of education loans owed by the student at that date, the amount of any new loans to be disbursed during the academic year, the projected cumulative balance of education loans that will be owed after graduation, and projected monthly payment amounts assuming a standard repayment plan. The U.S. Department of Education would create a template for schools to comply.

**Status:** H.R. 1429 was introduced by Rep. Luke Messer (R-IN-6) on Mar. 8, 2017 and was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke

**H.R. 1614, Student Loan Refinancing Act**

This legislation would allow students to refinance Direct Loans at the interest rate at the time of the modification.

**Status:** H.R. 1614 was introduced by Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wisc.-2) on Mar. 17, 2017 and was referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

**AVMA Position:** Support

**Primary Contact:** Gina Luke

**Monitoring**

The AVMA is monitoring the following bills:

- S. 498 Battlefield Excellence through Superior Training (BEST) Practices Act
- H.R. 816 Federal Accountability in Chemical Testing (FACT) Act
- S. 503 Animal Welfare Accountability and Transparency
- H.R. 1274 State, Tribal, and Local Species Transparency
- H.R. 1406 Dog and Cat Meat Trade Prohibition Act
- H.R. 1108 Recall Unsafe Drugs Act of 2017
- H.R. 1127 Student Loan Fairness Act
More Information

Get the latest information on current legislative issues by signing up for the monthly e-newsletter The AVMA Advocate and by visiting AVMA’s website under the “Advocacy” tab. You can take action on any of these bills by visiting AVMA’s Congressional Advocacy Network (AVMA-CAN) Web page. Be sure to follow the AVMA-CAN on Twitter @AVMACAN and Facebook at facebook.com/avmacan.