Dear AVMA members,

The 113th Congress has dealt with many domestic and foreign policy challenges, and partisan gridlock intensified ahead of the 2014 elections. The rising discontent with the rollout and implementation of healthcare reform sent some lawmakers into frenzy, blocking an agreement to fund the government and forcing a 16-day government shutdown in October 2013. The economy improved over the past two years, but voters are still frustrated by what's going on in the nation's capital and voted out the Republican's House majority leader and a number of sitting Democratic lawmakers in the midterm elections. To top it off, this Congress has had to deal with many unexpected, pressing challenges, including the threat of the growing terrorist group ISIS, the Ebola virus epidemic in Africa and how to contain it in the United States, a presidential order on immigration and domestic unrest over race relations.

Although many issues will fall on the 114th Congress to resolve, the AVMA was pleased to see many of our legislative priorities for veterinary medicine advance this Congress. Most notably, the president signed into law the Veterinary Medicine Mobility Act – a bill the AVMA was instrumental in drafting and guiding to passage – that will allow veterinarians the ability to continue providing complete care to their animal patients in rural areas. President Obama also signed the Farm Bill into law, which was the culmination of five years of work by the AVMA and its members to push for establishment of programs that will improve access to veterinary care in America's rural communities and punish those who attend animal fights. He also signed into law legislation that will facilitate the Food and Drug Administration's review of new and generic animal drugs, supporting the ongoing healthcare of our nation's animals.

Much to our disappointment, however, our legislative work remains unfinished. The Prevent All Soring Tactics Act, which had the support of more than 350 legislators and nearly every veterinary medical organization in the United States, died this Congress despite an incredible outpouring of support from advocates. The AVMA was also disappointed to see Congress punt comprehensive tax reform to the next session, neglecting two important bills—one that will level the playing field between brick-and-mortar retailers and their online counterparts and another that will remove an unnecessary tax that hinders more veterinarians from working in areas where they are needed most.

Not all successes come in the form of bills passed. The association was pleased to see veterinarians in Congress, Reps. Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.) and Ted Yoho (R-Fla.), spearhead the first-ever House Veterinary Medicine Caucus, bringing awareness to legislative issues impacting the veterinary medical profession and animal health and welfare. AVMA's Governmental Relations Division has also been involved in a myriad of activities over the past two years, including holding two annual legislative fly-ins and working with the AVMA Council on Research and the AVMA Task Force on Veterinary Compounding Legislation to better advocate for legislation and regulations that support veterinarians. Our staff also helped the association commemorate its 150th anniversary by coordinating with the Smithsonian Institution and Zoetis to bring the Animal Connections exhibit to D.C. during the fall of 2013.

The 114th Congress is expected to be just as busy, but we hope to see more progress on our legislative initiatives. Incoming Republican leadership has already signaled its support for an ambitious legislative calendar, promising more days in Washington to help bridge the partisan divide and get work done. On tap for the next session of Congress are: comprehensive tax reform; reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which impacts financial assistance to postsecondary students and higher education accreditation; fiscal 2016 appropriations; and immigration reform. I expect that the AVMA will be working diligently to lower the cost of student loans, eliminate the withholding tax on the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program, stop the horrific practice of horse soring, ban the use of double-decker trailers for transporting horses, securing appropriations for key veterinary programs and more.

Thank you for your continued support of AVMA's advocacy efforts.

Dr. Mark T. Lutschaunig
Director
AVMA Governmental Relations Division
AVMA’s Council on Research urges Congress to fund important agricultural and biomedical research.

Several walking horses ride on the U.S. capitol in support of an anti-soring bill.

AVMA leadership holds signed Veterinary Medicine Mobility Act.

Veterinarians and U.S. Congressmen Ted Yoho and Kurt Schrader meet with participants of AVMA’s 2013 legislative fly-in.
The AVMA was pleased to see several key pieces of legislation that promote animal health and welfare and advance the veterinary medical profession passed into law in the 113th Congress.

**VETERINARY MEDICINE MOBILITY ACT**

In a major victory for the healthcare of our nation’s animals, the Veterinary Medicine Mobility Act (H.R. 1528) was signed into law on Aug. 1, 2014, making it legal for veterinarians to provide complete medical care to their patients beyond their clinics and across state lines. The AVMA had been working on getting this bill passed for nearly two years, meeting with the Drug Enforcement Administration and members of Congress to explain why a restrictive provision within the Controlled Substances Act needed to be amended so veterinarians would be permitted to use all of the medications available to provide the best care for their patients. Over 130 veterinary medical and other organizations joined the AVMA in its advocacy efforts. Those efforts were amplified when the association took out advertisements in D.C. beltway publications to reach Capitol Hill staff and activated its Congressional Advocacy Network (AVMA-CAN), resulting in AVMA members sending more than 27,000 letters to Congress in support of this crucial bill.

**FARM BILL**

After five years of hard work, legislators from both sides of the aisle came together in early February 2014 to pass a comprehensive Farm Bill (The Agricultural Act of 2014), giving veterinarians and scientists the resources they need to continue providing the best veterinary care to animals, guarding the country against diseases that impact animal and public health, advancing science, and keeping America’s food supply safe and affordable. The AVMA had been a longtime advocate for this legislation, urging policymakers to respond to the critical need for more agricultural research that supports advancements in animal health, production and products. Of note, the Farm Bill:

- Authorized $15 million annually for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, an early warning disease surveillance program;
- Authorized up to $10 million annually to establish a new competitive Veterinary Services Grant Program that will complement the existing Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program by helping relieve veterinary shortage situations in rural areas of the country;
- Expanded the Animal Health and Disease Research (AHDR)/1433 Formula Funds to include competitive grants on food security, One Health and stewardship;
- Established and endowed a Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research with $200 million for new research projects aimed at addressing problems of national and international significance;
- Reauthorized up to $2.5 million annually for the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD), which helps ensure meat and dairy products are free of drug and chemical residues before entering the food supply; and
- Reauthorized up to $700 million annually for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), which provides grants for research, education and extension work into sustaining all components of U.S. agriculture.

“This work [on the Veterinary Medicine Mobility Act] proves that when AVMA’s members bring forward concerns, we listen; and we work extremely hard to ensure that our leaders in Washington craft public policies that promote the health and welfare of animals and advance the veterinary profession.”

– Dr. Ted Cohn, AVMA president 2014-2015
ANIMAL FIGHTING SPECTATOR PROHIBITION ACT
The Farm Bill also included an important provision, the Animal Fighting Spectator Prohibition Act (H.R. 366/S. 666), which cracks down on the abusive practice of animal fighting by making it a federal crime to attend, or cause a minor under the age of 16 to attend, these cruel events.

CONSOLIDATED AND FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF 2015
In one of its final acts as a lawmaking body in December 2014, the 113th Congress passed the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 (H.R. 83), a spending bill that funds most governmental agencies through the end of the 2015 fiscal year. Each year, the AVMA, along with its many member veterinarians and stakeholders, advocates for funding for programs that are important to the veterinary profession and that directly influence animal health and welfare as part of the congressional appropriations process. The AVMA was pleased to see many high-priority veterinary and agriculture programs maintain or increase their funding levels through September 2015. In particular, the bill included:

★ $5 million for the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP), which places veterinarians in underserved areas of the country in exchange for student loan repayment;

★ $1.25 million for FARAD;

★ $6.68 million for the Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative (FADI), which funds the national lab networks that conduct surveillance and respond to disease outbreaks that could impact human or animal health;

★ $1.29 billion for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which supports research, extension and higher education in partnership with American universities;

★ $1.17 billion for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), which conducts basic and applied research to develop solutions to U.S. agricultural problems, including animal health;

★ $874.5 million for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), which works to prevent 160 animal diseases from entering the United States and eradicate harmful diseases that could impact the economy;

★ $1 billion for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, which works to ensure that the nation’s commercial supply of meat, poultry and egg products is safe, wholesome and correctly labeled and packaged;

★ $4.49 billion for the Food and Drug Administration, which regulates food, human and animal drugs, medical devices and cosmetics; and

★ $30.8 billion for the National Institutes of Health, which conducts important biomedical research.

“The Farm Bill is often referred to as the ‘Food, Farm and Jobs Bill,’ but here at the AVMA, we’d like to add that it’s a bill for animals too, because of its far-reaching impact on the work that veterinarians do every day to protect their health and welfare.”

- Dr. Ron DeHaven, AVMA’s executive vice president and CEO
CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF 2014
Earlier in the Congress on Jan. 17, 2014, the president signed into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (H.R. 3547), which funded the federal government through the end of fiscal 2014. AVMA’s legislative priorities also fared well in this omnibus bill, which included:

★ $4.79 million in funding for the VMLRP;
★ $1.25 million for FARAD;
★ $6.68 million for FADI;
★ $2.6 billion for several agriculture research programs, including AHDR, ARS and AFRI;
★ more than $821 million for APHIS; and
★ $404 million for the construction of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, which is a bio-containment facility used to study foreign animal, emerging and zoonotic diseases that threaten U.S. animal agriculture and public health.

ANIMAL DRUG AND ANIMAL GENERIC DRUG USER FEE REAUTHORIZATION ACT
The AVMA was pleased to see the Animal Drug and Animal Generic Drug User Fee Reauthorization Act (S. 622) signed into law on June 13, 2013, reauthorizing two programs that ensure veterinarians, livestock and poultry producers, and pet owners have access to the drugs they need to keep their animals healthy. The bill permits the Food and Drug Administration to collect user fees from pharmaceutical companies so that it can evaluate the effectiveness and safety of proposed new animal drugs and expedite the rigorous drug approval process.

New law helps the FDA review and approve animal drugs for the marketplace.

MULTINATIONAL SPECIES CONSERVATION FUNDS SEMIPOSTAL STAMP REAUTHORIZATION ACT
On Sept. 19, 2014, the president signed the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Reauthorization Act (S. 231) into law, helping to raise millions of dollars for the conservation of endangered species. The AVMA, along with the Multinational Species Coalition—a diverse group of organizations with the goal of protecting key endangered species—has been advocating for this legislation since 2011. The organizations hoped that the stamp renewal would continue to support work within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Wildlife Without Borders–Species Programs, which works with partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and other areas of the world to help conserve and manage species.
AVMA MOVES THE NEEDLE
ON IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR VETERINARIANS, ANIMAL HEALTH & WELFARE

Although the AVMA worked with its members and allied organizations to get many important bills passed, much of our work remained unfinished at the close of the 113th Congress, as is often the case in Washington.

PREVENT ALL SORING TACTICS (PAST) ACT
The AVMA saw a huge outpouring of support for the Prevent All Soring Tactics (PAST) Act (H.R. 1518/S. 1406), a bill that will take many important steps to ban the inhumane practice of soring walking horses to get them to lift their legs higher and faster in the show ring. On Nov. 13, 2013, AVMA's Chief Executive Officer Dr. Ron DeHaven testified before the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade, urging Congress to stop the culture of abuse that has existed in the walking horse industry for more than 40 years. The association educated Hill staff about the detrimental effects soring has on horses at a lunch and learn in July 2013 and attended the “Walk on Washington” in June 2014. The association also advertised in several D.C. publications and on social media targeting the nation’s lawmakers and mobilized its Congressional Advocacy Network, resulting in more than 10,000 letters sent to members of Congress in support of this bill. The AVMA was joined in many of these activities by the American Association of Equine Practitioners and nearly every state veterinary organization in the country. Despite our efforts and the support of more than 300 U.S. House members and nearly 60 U.S. senators, the PAST Act was stalled by a few elected officials in key positions and by the introduction of an alternative bill (the Horse Protection Amendments Act, H.R. 4098/S. 2193). Because of this opposition, the PAST Act never made it to the floor for a vote in either chamber.

VETERINARY MEDICINE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT ACT
The association fought hard to grow support for the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) Enhancement Act (S. 553/H.R. 1125). The VMLRP places food animal and public health veterinarians in underserved areas of the country in exchange for up to $75,000 in student loan repayment, but unfortunately each award is subject to a 39 percent withholding tax. This legislation would remove the withholding tax, allowing more veterinarians the opportunity to provide care in areas where they are needed most. Since Congress indicated it would work on tax extenders legislation during its 2014 lame duck session, the AVMA saw this as a possible vehicle to move this important legislation. In addition to its amplified lobbying efforts, the AVMA created several communications products to explain how important this program is to America's ranchers and farmers, including advertisements in D.C. publications and multimedia content.

MARKETPLACE FAIRNESS ACT
As part of the Marketplace Fairness Coalition, the AVMA lobbied hard to pass the Marketplace Fairness Act (S. 743/H.R. 684), which would require states to collect sales taxes from online purchases made anywhere throughout the country, leveling the playing field between veterinarians who sell goods from neighborhood clinics and online retailers. Currently, Internet retailers are not obligated to collect state and local sales taxes if they do not already have a physical presence in the state. This gives them an unfair competitive edge over local veterinary practice owners by being able to charge lower prices for any prescriptions, products or equipment they sell. After the Senate bill passed in May 2013, the AVMA joined more than 300 U.S. organizations in a call to the House to take up this important legislation as part of any tax legislation it tackled near the end of the congressional session.
AVMA FIGHTS UPHILL BATTLE ON LEGISLATION THAT WILL HURT THE VETERINARY PROFESSION

The AVMA saw several bills introduced this Congress that are being sold under the guise of helping animal or human health. In reality, they will likely increase the regulatory burden already being felt by America’s veterinarians and raise the cost of providing animal healthcare. The association, along with its members and allied organizations, fought hard to stop these bills in their tracks.

**FAIRNESS TO PET OWNERS ACT**

In early 2014, the AVMA was disappointed to see Congress once again introduce the Fairness to Pet Owners Act (H.R. 4023/S. 2756), which would place onerous regulatory burdens on veterinarians by requiring them to provide a copy of each prescription for a companion animal, whether or not requested by the pet owner. The AVMA and its members worked to educate lawmakers on current state laws, policies and regulations that already give clients the flexibility to obtain a prescription from their veterinarian and fill it at a veterinary clinic or off-site pharmacy of their choice. The association also advised that this bill is not necessary at this time since the Federal Trade Commission is still examining the competition and consumer protection issues within the pet medications industry. At the close of the 113th Congress, this bill received little support from lawmakers—only four cosponsors in the House and two in the Senate. Though this bill did not gain traction this Congress, the tides could change if retailers or consumers begin lobbying in support of it. The AVMA encourages its member veterinarians to always honor a client’s request for a prescription when asked, in accordance with the AVMA’s Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics, so the association can continue to tell Congress that this bill is unnecessary.

**MEDICAL DEVICE TAX PROVISION**

The Affordable Care Act, commonly referred to as “Obamacare,” included a Medical Device Tax provision that would impose a 2.3 percent excise tax on the sale of medical devices by the manufacturer, distributor or importer of the device. Congress plans to use this tax to help raise $29 billion over 10 years to pay for healthcare reform. Although the tax does not impact medical devices that are intended exclusively for use in veterinary medicine, there are instances when veterinarians purchase devices that are “intended for humans” for use in their practices. The concern for AVMA members is that even though manufacturers are being hit with the tax, they could potentially pass it on to the purchasers (i.e. veterinarians), which could raise the cost of providing animal healthcare. The AVMA continues to support bills that would repeal the medical device excise tax, such as the Protect Medical Innovation Act (H.R. 523), the Medical Device Access and Innovation Protection Act (S. 232) and the Medical Device Tax Elimination Act (H.R. 1295). During the 113th Congress, the AVMA conducted a number of media interviews to educate the public and lawmakers about how this tax will subsidize human healthcare at the expense of veterinary medicine, with no direct benefit to the health and welfare of the nation’s animals.
AVMA’s work in Washington, D.C., is contingent on members of Congress hearing from their constituents on issues that are important to them. The association is extremely excited and thankful to see so many members and veterinary students answer the call to action over the past two years by: writing letters to their members of Congress, applying to participate in the governmental relations student extern and congressional fellowship programs, lobbying at fly-ins, supporting the political action committee and sharing content in social media.

AVMA CONGRESSIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORK (AVMA-CAN)
Each year, the AVMA Congressional Advocacy Network (AVMA-CAN) encourages veterinarians and veterinary students to learn about the association’s legislative agenda and take part in advocating for their profession. This Congress, the AVMA-CAN traveled to the North American Veterinary Conference in Orlando, the Western Veterinary Conference in Las Vegas, and the annual SAVMA Symposium, held at various veterinary colleges around the nation, to sign up members to the advocacy network and encourage them to send letters to their members of Congress on key legislation. The association was pleased to see over 25,000 members mobilize this Congress, sending a whopping 52,000 letters to Capitol Hill on a range of legislative issues, including: the Veterinary Medicine Mobility Act, the Fairness to Pet Owners Act, the Prevent All Soring Tactics Act and the Veterinary Medical Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act. These advocates were also instrumental in helping the AVMA-CAN spread its message on Facebook and Twitter.
The AVMA Congressional Fellowship Program is a unique way for veterinarians at all stages in their careers to learn about the legislative process and take part firsthand in developing public policies that will have a national and global impact.”

– Dr. Mark Lutschaunig, director of AVMA’s Governmental Relations Division

Incoming congressional fellows for 2014-2015 gear up for an exciting year in Washington, D.C.

AVMA CONGRESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM
Since 1988, the AVMA Congressional Fellowship Program has sent 63 veterinarians to Capitol Hill for yearlong assignments where they are paid to use their scientific expertise and training in veterinary medicine to advise their respective members of Congress on a variety of policy issues, including: agriculture, animal health and welfare, appropriations, biosecurity, education, environmental, food safety, international and public health. The 2012-2013 class of AVMA fellows was: Dr. Tristan Colonius in the office of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.); Dr. Donald Hoenig in the office of Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine); and Dr. Kaylee Myhre in the minority staff office of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the majority staff office of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security. The 2013-2014 class of AVMA fellows was: Dr. Eric Deeble in Gillibrand’s office; Dr. Donald Hoenig in the office of Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine); and Dr. Kaylee Myhre in the minority staff office of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the majority staff office of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security. The 2013-2014 class of AVMA fellows was: Dr. Tristan Colonius in the office of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.); Dr. Donald Hoenig in the office of Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine); and Dr. Kaylee Myhre in the minority staff office of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the majority staff office of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security. The 2013-2014 class of AVMA fellows was: Dr. Tristan Colonius in the office of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.); Dr. Donald Hoenig in the office of Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine); and Dr. Kaylee Myhre in the minority staff office of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the majority staff office of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security. The 2013-2014 class of AVMA fellows was: Dr. Tristan Colonius in the office of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.); Dr. Donald Hoenig in the office of Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine); and Dr. Kaylee Myhre in the minority staff office of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the majority staff office of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security. The 2013-2014 class of AVMA fellows was: Dr. Tristan Colonius in the office of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.); Dr. Donald Hoenig in the office of Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine); and Dr. Kaylee Myhre in the minority staff office of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the majority staff office of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security.

Currently serving are the 2014-2015 class of fellows: Dr. Elise Ackley in Durbin’s office; Dr. Chase Crawford in the office of Sen. Al Franken (D-Minn.); and Dr. Carrie La Jeunesse in the office of Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-Neb.).
AVMA GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS DIVISION
STUDENT EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM
Each year, AVMA’s Governmental Relations Division selects 10 veterinary students from across the country to spend four weeks in Washington, D.C., as part of its Governmental Relations Division Student Externship Program. Since 1991, more than 200 student externs have had the opportunity to participate and learn about the important role veterinarians play in the development and implementation of public policy. The following students served as AVMA governmental relations externs in 2013 and 2014: Samantha McDonnel of the University of California-Davis; Kristen Hamsley and Taylor Winkleman of the University of Georgia; Stacey Bunting, Terese Noe and Spencer White of the University of Illinois; McKenzie Steger of Iowa State University; Kayla Stomack of Michigan State University; Kalie Pettit of the University of Minnesota; Spencer Mills of Mississippi State University; Kevin Przybylski of The Ohio State University; Tayler Foshee of Oklahoma State University; Tabitha Basine, Alex Blutinger, Catherine Brinkley, Zachary Kern and Nicola Painter of the University of Pennsylvania; Allison Joe of Purdue University; Seiche Genger of the University of Tennessee; Emerson Tuttle of Tufts University; and Tomasina Lucia of Washington State University.

AVMA LEGISLATIVE FLY-IN
In 2014, the AVMA held its 6th annual Legislative Fly-In, bringing for the first time both AVMA leadership and veterinary students together to the nation’s capital. The past, present and future presidents of the AVMA sat alongside veterinary students from across the country to learn about the top legislative issues facing animal health and welfare and the veterinary profession before being set loose on Capitol Hill to meet with members of Congress and/or their staff to advocate for or against key legislation. Among the highlights of the fly-in, the 100 participants had the opportunity to hear from Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.), a veterinarian who was co-chair of the 113th Congress’s House Veterinary Medicine Caucus, and U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.). In 2013, the association’s 5th annual fly-in hosted 75 veterinary students who also heard from Yoho as well as the other veterinarian and House Veterinary Medicine Caucus co-chair, Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.).

OTHER ACTIVITIES
The Governmental Relations Division hosted a few other groups that are working on pressing legislative and regulatory issues in Washington this Congress. In late September 2013, the AVMA Council on Research came to the nation’s capital to educate congressional staff about the important role that veterinarians play in agricultural and biomedical research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Institutes of Health and to advocate for funding for key programs. The AVMA Task Force on Veterinary Compounding Legislation held two meetings in D.C. in 2014, where it reviewed AVMA’s current compounding policies and learned more about the history of how changes to current legislation may or may not impact the practice of compounding for veterinary medicine.