



Legislative Agenda for the 116th Congress

updated December 2019

AVMA's Government 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 116th Congress (Jan. 2019-Dec. 2020).

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Resources

AVMA Legislative Scoring System

The AVMA prioritizes how it will address bills when they are introduced 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.
- **Nonsupport** – 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 Government Relations Division staff will continue to monitor the legislation and advise AVMA’s Legislative Advisory Committee should the legislation’s status change.

AVMA Government Relations Division Contacts

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

- Dr. Kent McClure, Chief of Government Relations, 800-321-1473 ext. 3203, kmclure@avma.org
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Issue Areas

Federal appropriations for fiscal 2020

- The chart below includes the recent funding history for AVMA programs of interest, AVMA FY 2020 requests, and the levels proposed in the President’s Budget and the House bill to-date.
- AVMA also endorses community-wide efforts to support funding for: animal health and welfare; wildlife services; antimicrobial research, stewardship, and monitoring; and the Department of Interior’s needs to BLS-4 wildlife laboratory

Program/Agency	FY 2018 Final	FY 2019 Final	FY 18 vs FY 19	FY 2020 President’s Budget	House FY 2020 Bill	House bill vs FY 19	AVMA FY 2020 Asks (&VMLRPEA)	AVMA Ask vs. FY 19
Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (USDA/NIFA)	\$8 m	\$8 m	\$0	\$5m	\$9m	+\$1 m	\$9 m (&VMLRPEA)	+\$1 m
Veterinary Services Grant Program (USDA/NIFA)	\$2.5 m	\$3 m	+\$500,000	\$0	\$3 m	\$0	\$3 m	\$0
Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (USDA/NIFA)	\$2.5 m	\$2.5 m	\$0	\$0	\$2.5m	\$0	\$2.5 m	\$0
Animal Health and Disease Research (USDA/NIFA)	\$4 m	\$4m	\$0	\$0	\$4m	\$0	\$10 m	+\$6 m
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service ¹ (USDA/APHIS)	\$982 m	\$1.011 b		\$981 m	\$1.034 b	+\$22.8m	At least \$1.011 b	
National Animal Health Laboratory Network ² (USDA/APHIS and NIFA)	\$16.3 m	\$16.3 m	\$0	-	\$16.3m	\$0	\$30 m	
Center for Veterinary Biologics (USDA/APHIS)	\$16.417 m	\$16.417 m	\$0	\$16.417 m	\$18.417m	+\$2m	\$20.5 m	
Veterinary Diagnostics (USDA/APHIS)	\$39.5 m	\$50.14 m ³	+\$10.6m	\$49.23m	\$54.34m	+\$4.2m	NA	
National Veterinary Stockpile (USDA/APHIS)	\$5.725 m	\$5.725 m	\$0	\$5.725 m	\$5.725 m	\$0	NA	
Horse Protection Act enforcement (USDA/APHIS)	\$705,000	\$705,000	\$0	\$705,000	\$1m	+\$295,000	NA	
FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine	\$107.9 m	\$113.45 m	+\$5.55 m	\$166.9 m	\$242.6 m		\$198.314 m	

¹Total does not include funding for buildings and facilities

²NAHLN funding comes from APHIS and NIFA; \$12 m APHIS and \$4.3 m NIFA.

³Note the FY 2019 conference agreement includes a \$10.6 million increase for APHIS Veterinary Diagnostics to support NBAF.

*FDA is an agency that is housed within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); however, it is funded through the Agriculture Rural Development, FDA Appropriations Subcommittee.

Status: On May 23, 2019, the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee approved by voice vote the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2020, which the House Appropriations Committee approved on June 4, 2019 by a vote of 29-21. House rule, H. Res. 445, passed by the House on June 19, 2019, combined the following five regular appropriations bills, 2020, as reported, with modifications: (1) CJS (H.R. 3055), (2) Agriculture (H.R. 3164), (3) Interior (H.R. 3052), (4) Mil-Con, VA (H.R. 2745), and THUD (H.R. 3163).

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, National Association for Biomedical Research, the Coalition on Biodefense & Public Health Preparedness, and Wildlife Services Coalition.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Ms. Alex Sands

Animal Health and Welfare Issues

H.R. 961/S. 2006 Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act of 2019

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. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-9) introduced H.R. 961 on February 4, 2019, and it was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the House Committee on Agriculture Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture. Senator Robert Menendez(D-NJ) introduced S.2006 on June 27, 2019 and it was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1157/S. 1455 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-TN-4) introduced H.R. 1157 February 13, 2019 and it was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) introduced S.1455 on May 14, 2019 and it was referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 693/S. 1007 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. Kurt Schrader (D-OR-5) and Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL-3) introduced H.R. 693 on January 22, 2019 and it was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce. The bill had over 290 cosponsors, so it was placed on the Consensus Calendar. On July 24, H.R. 693 was considered under suspension of the rules, and on July 25, it passed by a vote of 333 – 96. On July 29, 2019, it was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) introduced S. 1007 on April 3, 2019 and it was referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 524/ S. 479 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. 524 was introduced by Rep. Theodore Deutch (D-FL-22) on January 23, 2019 and was referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. S. 479 was introduced by Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA) on February 13, 2019 and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 487/S. 1255 Transporting Livestock Across America Safely Act

This bill would require the Secretary of Transportation to modify provisions relating to hours of service requirements with respect to transportation of livestock (and insects). Certain minor differences exist between the House and Senate bills. The House bill directs the regulation to cover additional animals other than livestock. This same provision is not in the Senate bill (S.1255). The legislation provides that Hours of Service (HOS) and Electronic Logging Device (ELD) requirements are inapplicable until after a driver travel more than 300+ air miles from their source. Drive time for HOS purposes does not start until after 300-air mile threshold. The bill exempts loading and unloading times from the HOS calculation of driving time and extends the HOS on-duty time maximum hour requirement from 11 hours to a minimum of 15 hours and a maximum of 18 hours of on-duty time. The legislation also grants flexibility for drivers to rest at any point during their trip without counting against HOS time.

Status: H.R. 487 was introduced on January 10, 2019 by Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL-3) and referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. S. 1255 was introduced on April 30, 2019 by Senator Ben Sasse (R-NE) and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Lauren Broccoli

H.R.2460/S. 600 Modernizing Agricultural Transportation Act

This legislation would require the Secretary of Transportation to establish a working group to study regulatory and legislative improvements for the livestock, insect, and agricultural commodities transport industries.

Status: H.R. 2460 was introduced by Rep. Greg Pence (R-IN-6) on May 1, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. S. 600 was introduced by Senator John Hoevan(R-ND) on February 28, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Lauren Broccoli

H.R. 837 Chronic Wasting Disease Transmission in Cervidae Study Act

H.R. 837 would have the Secretary of Agriculture conduct a special resource study to identify the predominant pathways and mechanisms of the transmission of chronic wasting disease in wild, captive, and farmed populations of species of the family Cervidae in the United States.

Status: H.R. 837 was Introduced 2/15/2019 and by Rep. Ralph Abraham (R-LA-5) and referred to the House Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, Subcommittee on Livestock and Horticulture and the House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Lauren Broccoli

H.R. 220 National Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Control and Accountability Act

This bill establishes the Office of Oversight and Coordination for Tick-Borne Diseases within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The office must oversee the creation of a national strategy to address Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases and disorders. The national strategy must include program assessments, benchmarks for progress, and recommendations from the previously established Tick-Borne Disease Working Group. The bill also requires HHS to undertake specific actions that promote research, prevention, and treatment of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases and disorders. Among other things, HHS must:

support expansive research into the pathology, diagnosis, and treatment of such diseases and disorders; establish a surveillance system to track the prevalence of such diseases and disorders in humans; establish a surveillance system to track the prevalence of disease-carrying ticks; conduct educational campaigns; and hold a series of research symposiums.

Status: H.R. 220 was introduced by Rep. Christopher Smith (R-NJ-4) on January 3, 2019 and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Health.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Lauren Broccoli

H.R. 1400 Horse Transportation Safety Act

This legislation would amend title 49 of the US Code to prohibit the transportation of horses in interstate transportation in a motor vehicle containing two or more levels stacked on top of one another. Definition of a motor vehicle excludes vehicle operated exclusively on rails. The bill imposes a civil penalty for violation.

Status: H.R. 1400 was introduced on February 27, 2019 by Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN-9) and referred to the House Committee on Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 3593/S. 1601 Helping Overcome Trauma for Children in Rear Seats or the “Hot Cars Act of 2019”

To require the Secretary of Transportation to issue a rule requiring all new passenger motor vehicles to be equipped with a child safety alert system.

Status: H.R. 3593 was introduced by Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH-13) on June 28, 2019 and referred to House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection; and House Transportation and

Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. S. 1601 was introduced on May 22, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. On July 10, 2019, the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation ordered the legislation to be reported without amendment favorably.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1228/S. 513 Help Extract Animals from Red Tape Act of 2019 or the “HEART Act of 2019”

This bill modifies notice requirements in a civil forfeiture proceeding that involves the seizure of an animal involved in animal fighting. Specifically, the government must notify interested parties of an animal's seizure within 30 days (currently, 60 days). The notice period may be extended only if a delay is warranted after considering certain factors, including the cost to the government of providing shelter for the animal, the health of the animal and the effect of a delay on its rehabilitation, and any increased risk that a delay could necessitate the euthanasia of the animal. Additionally, the bill authorizes amounts in the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund to be used to pay for costs associated with a seized animal, including transportation, shelter, care, veterinary services, and humane euthanasia.

Status: H.R. 1228 was introduced by Rep. Judy Chu, (D-CA-27) on February 14, 2019 and referred to the Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. S. 513 was introduced by Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) on February 14, 2019 and referred to Committee on the Judiciary.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 2897/S. 2322 Animal Freedom from Testing, Experiments, and Research Act of 2019 or the “AFTER Act of 2019”

This legislation requires federal research facilities to facilitate the adoption or nonlaboratory placement of certain warm-blooded animals (e.g., dogs, cats, monkeys, guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits) with animal rescue organizations, animal sanctuaries, animal shelters, or individuals. In order to be adopted or placed, the animals must (1) no longer be needed for research; (2) be suitable for release; (3) not be birds, rats, or mice.

Status: H.R. 2897 was introduced by Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA-2) on May 22, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture. S. 2322 was introduced by Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) on July 30, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1380 Big Cat Public Safety Act

This bill revises requirements governing the trade of big cats (i.e., species of lion, tiger, leopard, cheetah, jaguar, or cougar or any hybrid of such species). Specifically, it revises restrictions on the possession and exhibition of big cats, including to restrict direct contact between the public and big cats.

Status: Introduced by Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL-5) on February 26, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife. Hearings held March 26, 2019.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1622/S. 708 Kittens In Traumatic Testing Ends Now Act of 2018 or the “KITTEN Act of 2018”

This legislation would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to end the use of cats in experiments that cause pain or stress. Specifically, the legislation amends the Animal Welfare Act so that the Secretary of Agriculture may not purchase, breed, transport, house, feed, maintain, dispose of, or conduct experiments on cats as part of the conduct of any study that would subject cats to potentially painful or stressful procedures, including pain or stress that may be mitigated by anesthetics, analgesics, or tranquilizer drugs, except when such pain or stress is a result of a physical exam or training program.

Status: H.R. 1622 was introduced by Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA-20) on March 7, 2019 and referred to the House Agriculture Committee, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture. S. 708 was introduced by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) on March 7, 2019 and referred to the Senate Agriculture Committee.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1155 Preventing Unkind and Painful Procedures and Experiments on Respected Species Act of 2019 or the “PUPPERS Act of 2019”

H.R. 1155 would amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from conducting medical research causing significant pain or distress to dogs.

Status: H.R. 1155 was Introduced by Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV-1) on February 13, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Veteran Affairs, Subcommittee on Health.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 1189 To repeal section 12616 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, and for other purposes

This legislation would repeal section 12616 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. Section 12616 extends the prohibition on animal fighting to the U.S. territories.

Status: Introduced by Rep. Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon (R-PR-At Large) on February 13, 2019 and referred to the House Judiciary Committee and the House Agriculture Committee, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Mark Lutschaunig

H.R. 3771/S. 1903 Advancing Emergency Preparedness Through One Health Act

The legislation establishes an interagency “National One Health Framework” that requires intra-agency coordination on One Health. This framework would describe existing efforts and contain recommendations for building upon and complementing the activities of the departments, including assessment of activities; establishment of goals surrounding Federal goals and priorities on One Health; coordination and collaboration; and identification, surveillance, and prevention of priority zoonotic diseases and areas of study. The legislation places the Secretaries of the Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture as the two leaders of the framework, and would advance workforce development related to prevention and outbreaks, improve coordination, and potentially advance scientific understanding related to One Health. The bill places the U.S. Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Agriculture on equal levels in terms of importance and function.

Status: H.R. 3771 was introduced on July 16, 2019 by Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-OR-5) and Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL-3) on July 16, 2019 and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Agriculture Committee, Subcommittee on Livestock and Horticulture, Natural Resources Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee. S. 1903 was introduced by Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Lauren Broccoli

Food-Related Issues

H.R. 1589 CBRN Intelligence and Information Sharing Act

The bill would amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear intelligence and information sharing functions of the Office of Intelligence and Analysis of the Department of Homeland Security and to require dissemination of information analyzed by the Department to entities with responsibilities relating to homeland security. The Office of Intelligence and Analysis of the Department of Homeland Security will be directed to support homeland security-focused intelligence analysis of global infectious disease, public health, food, agricultural, and veterinary issues.

Status: Rep. Mark Walker (R-NC-6) introduced H.R. 1589 on March 7, 2019 and it was referred to the House Committee on Homeland Security. H.R. 1589 was considered under suspension of the rules and passed by voice vote on April 1, 2019. On April 2, 2019 it was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Lauren Broccoli

H.R. 2859/S. 1620 Processing Revival and Intrastate Meat Exemption (PRIME) Act

This bill amends the Federal Meat Inspection Act to expand the exemption of custom slaughtering of animals from federal inspection requirements. Under current law, the exemption applies if the meat is slaughtered for personal, household, guest, and employee use. The bill expands the exemption to include meat that is: slaughtered and prepared at a custom slaughter facility in accordance with the laws of the state where the facility is located; and prepared exclusively for distribution to household consumers in the state or restaurants, hotels, boarding houses, grocery stores, or other establishments in the state that either prepare meals served directly to consumers or offer meat and food products for sale directly to consumers in the state. The bill does not preempt any state law concerning: (1) the slaughter of animals or the preparation of carcasses, parts thereof, meat and meat food products at a custom slaughter facility; or (2) the sale of meat or meat food products.

Status: HR 2859 was introduced by Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY-4) on May 21, 2019 referred to the House Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture. S. 1620 was introduced on May 22, 2019 by Senator Angus King (I-ME) and referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Lauren Broccoli

Pharmaceutical Issues

H.R. 1607/S. 1290 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: HR. 1607 was introduced March 7, 2019 by Rep. Matt Cartwright (D-PA-8) and referred to House Energy and Commerce Committee. S. 1290 was introduced by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) on May 2, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Lauren Broccoli

Resources: For more information see AVMA's advocacy campaign page: [AVMA opposes prescription mandate legislation.](#)

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.

H.R. 4714/S. 2458 America Grows Act

The legislation authorizes a 5% annual funding increases for the next five years, or a \$2 billion increase, for research activities at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), specifically within the following:

- Agriculture Research Service (ARS) – USDA's chief in-house scientific research agency with 90+ locations nationwide and overseas.
- National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) – which funds external research through a nationwide network of land-grant colleges and universities, agricultural experiment stations, schools of forestry, schools of veterinary medicine, and cooperative extension experts.
- National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) – which collects and reports statistics on U.S. agriculture, such as the farm census, crop forecasts, and price estimates.
- Economic Research Service (ERS) – which provides economic and policy analysis on farming, ranching, food, conservation practices, farm management, commodity markets and rural economic development.

Status: H.R. 4714 was introduced by Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-IL-17) on October 17, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research, and the Committee on Budget. S. 2458 was introduced by Sen. Dick Durbin on September 9, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Budget.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

Small Business Issues

H.R. 1043/S.460 Employer Participation in Repayment Act

This bill expands the tax exclusion for employer-provided educational assistance to include payments of qualified education loans by an employer to either an employee or a lender.

Status: H.R. 1043 was introduced by Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA-52) on February 2, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Ways and Means. S. 460 was introduced by Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) on February 12, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 2294/S. 1170 Association Health Plans Act

The Legislation would codify the Department of Labor's Association Health Plan (AHP) regulations, which are currently being challenged in court. It amends the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to establish additional criteria for determining when employers may join together in a group or association of employers that will be treated as an employer under section 3(5) of ERISA for purposes of sponsoring a group health plan. The regulations and this proposed bill expand opportunities for small businesses to band together for more competitive health insurance

offerings for their employees. They do so by expanding the definition of “employer” under ERISA to allow industry-specific groups, employers within the same geographic region, and working-owners to participate in AHPs.

Status: H.R. 2294 was introduced by Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI-7) on April 12, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. S. 1170 was introduced by Senator Michael Enzi on April 11, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R.1994 Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement (SECURE) Act of 2019

The legislation aims to spur access to retirement and savings vehicles by: authorizing multiple-employer pension plans (also known as “association retirement plans,” similar to what AVMA is pursuing with regard to health insurance); authorizing a \$500 per year tax credit for small employer automatic enrollment; allowing non-tuition fellowship and stipend payments to be treated as compensation for IRA purposes; repealing of the maximum age for IRA contributions; allowing long-term part-time workers to participate in 401(k) plans; allowing for penalty-free withdrawals from retirement plans in the event of birth or adoption; expansion of 529 educational savings plans to support apprenticeships, home schooling, and higher education loan repayment.

Status: H.R. 1994 was introduced by Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA-1) on March 29, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means and the House Committee on Education and Labor. On April 24, 2019, the House Ways and Means Committee held a mark-up and reported the bill by voice vote. On May 16, 2019, the House Education and Labor discharged the bill. On May 23, 2019, the House passed the bill by a vote of 417-3. On June 3, 2019, the bill was received in the Senate.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

Tax Issues

H.R. 2746/S. 1163 Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act

The legislation would exempt Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) awards from withholding tax, allowing the VMLRP to further reduce the educational debt of livestock and public health veterinarians and further bolster access to veterinary services in rural America.

VMLRP awards may be up to \$75,000 over a three-year service contract (\$25,000 each year) and are considered taxable income to participants. Through the funding provided by Congress to implement the program, the USDA covers awardees’ federal tax payment of 37% (previously 39%) of the loan payment for participants to report and pay the tax owed. Both loan and tax payments are reported after the end of the calendar year to the IRS. Participants are responsible for paying the remainder of their federal tax liability, as well as any applicable state and local taxes that result from their VMLRP income.

By ending the withholding tax, the program will be able to support more veterinarians and reach more high-need communities within the current funding level provided. This is important as the program continues to receive ample applications but is limited in their ability to make awards due to funding constraints. Between 2010 and 2018, USDA offered nearly 500 VMLRP awards to veterinarians; meanwhile over 1,500 veterinarians applied to the program during the same time frame.

Status: H.R. 2746 was introduced by Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI-3) and Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE-3) on May 15, 2019 and referred to the House Ways and Means Committee. S. 1163 was introduced by Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) with Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) on April 11, 2019 and referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 513 Nonprofits Support Act and H.R. 1545/S. 632 Lift for Charities Act

H.R. 513 modifies the requirements for determining the unrelated business taxable income of tax-exempt organizations. The bill repeals provisions that (1) require organizations with more than one unrelated trade or business to compute unrelated business taxable income separately for each trade or business; and (2) increase unrelated business taxable income by the amount of expenses paid or incurred by an organization for certain fringe benefits for which a tax deduction is not allowed, including benefits relating to transportation, parking, or an on-premises athletic facility. H.R. 1545/S. 632 modify the requirements for determining the unrelated business taxable income of tax-exempt organizations. The bill repeals a provision that requires unrelated business taxable income to be increased by the amount of expenses paid or incurred by a tax-exempt organization for certain fringe benefits for which a tax deduction is not allowed, including benefits relating to transportation, parking, or an on-premises athletic facility.

Status: H.R. 513 was introduced by Rep. Mike Conaway(R-TX-11) on January 11, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. H.R. 1545 was introduced by Rep. Mark Walker (R-NC-6) on March 5, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. S. 632 was introduced by Senator James Lankford (R-OK) on February 28, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

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. **AVMA is working to advance legislation to:** 1) preserve Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program; 2) establish federal refinancing option; 3) eliminate origination fees; 4) lower interest rates; 5) maintain federal student loan borrowing limits; 6) increase awareness of income-driven repayment plans; 7) restore subsidized Stafford Loans; 8) maintain Perkins Loan Program; and 9) increase financial literacy.

H.R. 2099 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. 2099 was introduced by Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-Fla-20) on April 4, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans; in addition to the House Agriculture Committee, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 3689/S. 609 Protecting Job Opportunities for Borrowers Act, or Protecting JOBs Act

This legislation would prohibit States from suspending, revoking, or denying a driver's license or a state-issued professional license due to student loan default. It would also prohibit states from imposing fees on these individuals due to student loan default and provides borrowers an opportunity for legal recourse in the event of a states' non-compliance. States will have two years to comply.

Status: H.R. 3689 was introduced by Rep. Donna Shalala (D-FL-17) on July 10, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. S. 609 was introduced by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) on February 18, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 1651 Returning Essential Rural Veterinary Animal Care Act or "RE-VAC Act"

The bill would authorize assistance to be provided under certain rural development programs for the establishment or expansion of animal care facilities or veterinary practices in rural areas.

Status: H.R. 1651 was introduced by Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE-1) on March 8, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Commodity Exchanges, Energy, and Credit.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 3418 Protecting Our Students by Terminating Graduate Rates that Add to Debt Act (POST Grad Act)

The POST GRAD Act would amend Section 455(a)(3) of the Higher Education Act to reinstate Federal Direct Subsidized Loans for graduate and professional students thereby reducing their cost of borrowing for veterinary school and other graduate and professional programs.

Status: H.R. 3418 was introduced by Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA-27) on June 21, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 3102 Helping Individuals Get a Higher Education while Reducing Education Debt (HIGHER ED) Act

The legislation would: reinstate subsidized loan eligibility for graduate and professional students; permit borrowers to refinance Direct and FFEL loans as refinanced Direct loans; establish a Federal Direct Refinanced Private Loan Program to allow borrowers to refinance private loans; provide 50% debt forgiveness to students who make 60 consecutive monthly payments in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF). If enacted, partial PSLF forgiveness would be retroactive; reduce the number of repayment plan options to a standard 10-year repayment plan or an income-based repayment plan (IBR). IBR would be extended up to 25 years; and allow student debt to be discharged under bankruptcy.

Status: H.R. 3102 was introduced by Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR-4) on June 5, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and Committee on the Judiciary, and the Committee on Ways and Means.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

S. 1428 Retirement Parity for Student Loans Act

This bill allows certain employer-sponsored retirement plans to make matching contributions for an employee's student loan payments as if the loan payments were salary reduction contributions to the retirement plan.

Status: S. 1428 was introduced by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) on May 13, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Finance.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 2065/S. 1002 Affordable Loans for Any Student Act

This legislation would amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 in order to increase usage of the Federal student loan income-based repayment plan and improve repayment options for borrowers. Specifically, the legislation would end federal loan origination fees; end the practice of interest capitalization; reduce the number of repayment plans to two – an income-based repayment plan and a fixed 10-year plan; and simplify the process to enroll in either IBR repayment plan.

Status: H.R. 2065 was introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT-3) on April 3, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor, Committee on Ways & Means, and the Committee on Financial Services. S. 1002 was introduced by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR)on April 3, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 2728/S. 1489 Joint Consolidation Loan Separation Act

The legislation would allow two borrowers, who have received a joint consolidation loan for their student debt under the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program, to submit a joint application to sever their consolidated loan. One borrower may submit a separate application in the event that the individual is experiencing domestic or economic abuse from the other individual borrower or is unable to reasonably reach or access the loan information of the other borrower.

Status: H.R. 2728 was introduced by Rep. David Price (D-NC-4) on May 15, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor; S. 1489 was introduced by Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) on May 15, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 2129/S. 1496 Empowering Students Though Enhanced Financial Counseling Act

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

Status: H.R. 2129 was introduced by Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY-2) on May 13, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. S. 1496 was introduced by Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) on May 15, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 3674 Eliminating the Hidden Student Loan Tax Act; S. 1696, Student Loan Tax Elimination Act of 2019

H.R. 3674 and S. 1696 would remove federal student loan origination fees.

Status: H.R. 3674 was Introduced by Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA-53) on July 10, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor; S. 1696 was introduced by Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN)on June 3, 2019 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 2186 Student Loan Refinancing Act

The bill would allow borrowers of Federal Direct Loans including subsidized, unsubsidized and PLUS loans, to refinance their federal loan interest rate to whatever the current award year interest rate. Borrowers can have the interest rate refinanced at any time during the life of loan with no limit, with the exception that a loan can only be refinanced once every six months.

Status: Introduced by Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI-2) on April 9, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

H.R. 3098 Student Loan Interest Deduction Act

The bill would modify the tax deduction for student loan interest to increase the maximum deduction for interest paid on any qualified education loan to \$5,000 (\$10,000 for married couples filing a joint tax return), and to repeal the limitation on the deduction based upon modified adjusted gross income.

Status: Introduced by Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-CA-15) on June 4, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

S. 379 To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permit amounts paid for programs to obtain a recognized postsecondary credential or a license to be treated as qualified higher education expenses for purposes of a 529 account

This bill allows tax-exempt distributions from qualified tuition programs (known as 529 plans) to be used for expenses required for programs to obtain a recognized postsecondary credential or occupational license.

A "recognized postsecondary credential" is a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the state involved or federal government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Status: Introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) on February 7, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Finance.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

S. 1175 PSLF Technical Corrections Act

The bill seeks to extend PSLF eligibility to borrowers who have already invested up to 10 years toward making 120 on-time payments but may have been unaware that the payment plan in which they enrolled was not sanctioned for forgiveness.

Status: Introduced by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse(D-RI) on April 11, 2019 and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Alex Sands

Monitoring

The AVMA is **monitoring** the following bills:

- **H.R. 1042 Providing Responsible Emergency Plans for Animals at Risk of Emerging Disasters (PREPARED) Act:** This legislation would amend the Animal Welfare Act to require research facilities, dealers, exhibitors, intermediate handlers, and carriers (covered persons) to develop, document, and follow a contingency plan to provide for the humane handling, treatment, transportation, housing, and care of their animals in the event of an emergency or disaster.
- **H.R. 1337 Saving America's Pollinators Act of 2019**
H.R. 1337 requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish a Pollinator Protection Board to develop an independent review process for pesticides that pose a threat to pollinators and their habitats. The bill also requires the EPA to cancel the registrations of any pesticides containing imidacloprid, clothianidin, thiamethoxam, dinotefuran, acetamiprid, sulfoxaflor, flupyradifurone, or fipronil until the board has made a determination that such insecticide will not cause unreasonable adverse effects on pollinators based on findings that include results of studies of neonicotinoids and the effects of residues, repeated applications, and multiple chemical exposures. Under the bill, the EPA shall not issue any new registrations for any seed treatment, soil application, and foliar treatment on bee-attractive plants, trees, and cereals until the board has made determinations on such insecticides.
- **H.R. 1002 Welfare of Our Friends Act of 2019 or the “WOOF! Act”**
This legislation would amend the Animal Welfare Act to prohibit the issuance of licenses to certain individuals connected to dealers of dogs who have had licenses revoked.
- **H.R. 2471/S. 1301 Chemical Poisons Reduction Act of 2019 or the Canyon’s Law**
This legislation prohibits the use of sodium fluoroacetate (known as “Compound 1080”) and sodium cyanide to kill predatory animals in a predator control device given the risks posed by such poisons to public safety, national security, the environment, and persons and other animals that come into accidental contact with such poisons.
- **H.R. 4211 Animal Welfare Enforcement Improvement Act**
This bill revises the licensing process of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) for animal dealers and exhibitors to expand USDA's oversight and enforcement of animal welfare requirements. The bill also authorizes citizen suits to enforce the Animal Welfare Act.
- **H.R. 1776 Captive Primate Safety Act**
This legislation would amend the Lacey Act Amendments of 1981 to prohibit importation, exportation, transportation, sale, receipt, acquisition, and purchase in interstate or foreign commerce, or in a manner substantially affecting interstate or foreign commerce, of any live animal of any prohibited wildlife species.

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](#).