



Legislative Agenda for the 117th Congress

updated August 2022

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 117th Congress (Jan. 2021-Dec. 2022).

Table of Contents

Resources	2
AVMA’s Legislative Scoring System	2
AVMA Government Relations Division Contacts	2
Issue Areas	3
Appropriations	3
Animal Health and Welfare Issues	4
Food-Related Issues	4
Pharmaceutical Issues.....	10
Research Issues	9
Small Business Issues	10
Tax Issues	13
Veterinary Professional and Educational Issues	13
Bills AVMA is Monitoring	17
More Information	17

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 AVMA has reviewed the bill and the Governmental Relations Staff will continue to monitor the legislation and advise AVMA’s Legislative Advisory Committee should the legislation’s status change. 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.

AVMA Government Relations Division Contacts

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

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Appropriations

Federal appropriations for fiscal 2022

- The chart below includes the recent funding history for AVMA programs of interest, AVMA FY 2021 requests, and the levels proposed in the President’s Budget.
- 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

<i>Program/Agency</i>	<i>FY 2021 Final</i>	<i>FY 2022 Final</i>	<i>FY 2023 President’s Budget</i>	<i>PRES BUDGET vs FY 2022</i>	<i>AVMA FY 2023 Requests</i>	<i>2023 Ask vs 2022 Final</i>
<i>Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (USDA/NIFA)</i>	\$8.5m	\$9.5m	\$9m	-\$500k	\$10m (&VMLRPEA)	+\$500k
<i>Veterinary Services Grant Program (USDA/NIFA)</i>	\$3m	\$3.5m	\$3m	-\$500k	\$4m	+\$500k
<i>Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (USDA/NIFA)</i>	\$2.5m	\$2.5m	\$2m	-\$500k	\$2.5m	\$0
<i>Animal Health and Disease Research (USDA/NIFA)</i>	\$4m	\$4m	\$4	\$0	\$10m	+\$6m
<i>Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (USDA/NIFA)</i>	\$435m	\$445m	\$564m	+\$119 M	“at least” \$480m	+\$35m
<i>National Animal Health Laboratory Network (USDA/APHIS and NIFA)</i>	\$16.3m	\$4.266M (NIFA)	N/A	N/A	\$30m	N/A
<i>National Bio and Agro Defense Facility (ARS/APHIS)</i>	ARS: \$102.6m APHIS: \$31.8m	ARS: \$24.3m APHIS: \$24.3m	ARS: \$112m APHIS: \$24.6m	+\$88m	\$112m (ARS)	+\$87.7m
<i>Animal Welfare Act Enforcement (USDA/APHIS)</i>	\$31.661m	\$32.256m	\$36m	+\$3.7m	NA	NA
<i>Horse Protection Act Enforcement (USDA/APHIS)</i>	\$2m	\$3m	\$2.1m	-\$900k	\$3m	\$0

Status: In committee.

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: Kevin Hartley

Animal Health and Welfare Issues

H.R. 2061/S. 861 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. 2061 was introduced on March 18, 2021 by Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-SD) on and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Agriculture Committee, Subcommittee on Livestock and Horticulture, Natural Resources Committee and Foreign Affairs Committee. S. 861 was introduced by Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) and Senator Todd Young (R-IN) on March 18, 2021 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Lindsey Hornickel

H.R. 3355 Save America’s Forgotten Equines (SAFE) Act of 2021

Would amend the Horse Protection Act to prohibit the shipping, transporting, moving, delivering, receiving, possessing, purchasing, selling, or donation of horses and other equines to be slaughtered for human consumption.

Status: H.R. 3355 was introduced by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) on May 19, 2021 and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 3164 Helping Overcome Trauma for Children in Rear Seats or the “Hot Cars Act of 2021”

The legislation would require the Secretary of Transportation to issue a rule requiring all new passenger motor vehicles to be equipped with a child safety alert system, and for other purposes.

Status: H.R. 3164 was introduced by Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH) on May 12, 2021 and referred to House Energy and Commerce Committee.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

S. 1053 Modernizing Agricultural Transportation Act of 2021

This bill 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: S. 1053 was introduced on March 25, 2021 by Senator John Hoeven (R-ND) and Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Lindsey Hornickel

H.R. 4239/S. 2597 Healthy Dog Importation Act

This legislation would amend the Animal Health Protection Act with respect to the requirements, documentation, and enforcement of the importation of dogs.

Status: H.R. 4239 was introduced on June 29, 2021 by Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-SD) and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture. S. 2597 was introduced on August 4, 2021 by Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 2085 Help Extract Animals from Red Tape Act of 2021 or the "HEART Act of 2021."

This legislation would amend title 18, United States Code, with respect to civil forfeitures relating to certain seized animals. Specifically, the legislation accelerates the disposition process by reducing from 60 to 30 days the amount of time the government has to notify interested parties following the seizure of animals under the federal animal fighting or gambling statutes; Requires the court to consider the animals' welfare as well as the cost to the government when seeking to extend the notice period; Requires claimants to reimburse the costs of caring for animals seized in federal animal fighting cases when the government prevails in civil forfeiture proceedings; and gives judges the discretion to allow the consideration of the claimant's culpability, financial condition, and other factors when requiring and determining reimbursement.

Status: H.R. 2085 was introduced on March 19, 2021 by Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA) and Rep. John Katko (R-NY) and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 921 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. 921 was introduced on February 8, 2021 by Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN) Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV) and referred to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. The Horse Transportation Safety Act language was added to H.R.3684 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which passed in the House on July 1, 2021.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R.5261 Paws Off Act of 2021

The Paws Off Act would amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to require foods containing the sugar substitute xylitol include a warning label specifying its toxic effects. It would do this by making foods with xylitol to be deemed as misbranded unless the packaging contains this information.

Status: H.R. 5261 was introduced on September 14, 2021 by Rep. David Schweikert and was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 3277 Animal Welfare Enforcement Improvement Act

- Requires animal dealers and exhibitors to renew their licenses annually.
- Requires that inspections before issuing or renewing a license must be unannounced.
 - For initial applications, the applicant will have only two chances to pass an inspection and both inspections must occur within 90 days of the receipt of the application. If any noncompliance is observed during the second inspection, the application will be denied and the applicant cannot reapply for one year.
 - Renewal requires that the licensee have no more than one documented noncompliance with any standard for the humane care of animals during the previous two years.
- Requires a veterinary examination no less than once a year and “vaccinations for contagious or deadly diseases, and sampling and treatment of parasites and other pests, to which the species maintained by a dealer or exhibitor may be susceptible, in accordance with a schedule approved by the attending veterinarian.”
- Prohibits USDA from issuing or renewing a license if the dealer or exhibitor has been found to have violated any federal, state or local animal welfare law, or if the applicant is applying for a license to circumvent a state or local prohibiting the private ownership of certain animals as pets.
- Requires USDA to suspend the license of any dealer or exhibitor who commits a violation that presents a risk to animal welfare, and to permanently revoke the license (after notice and opportunity for a hearing) if the violation persists or the licensee has committed multiple violations.
- Prevents dealers and exhibitors whose licenses are suspended or revoked from being granted another license under another business name or through a business partner or family member, or from being employed by another licensee to work with animals during the period of the suspension or revocation.
- Authorizes citizen suits to enforce the Animal Welfare Act.
- Requires USDA to publish all inspection reports, enforcement records, and animal inventories online.
- Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to issue regulations to enforce this legislation no more than 90 days after the date of enactment.

Status: H.R. 3277 was reintroduced by Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) on May 17, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 263/S. 1210 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: H.R. 263 was introduced on November 11, 2021 by Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL) and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife. S. 1210 was introduced on April 19, 2021 by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R.3135/S. 1588 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. This bill limits the trade and possession of nonhuman primates. For example, the bill prohibits most individuals from owning a nonhuman primate as a pet.

Status: H.R. 3135 was reintroduced on May 12, 2021 by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife. Subcommittee hearings have been held. S. 1588 was reintroduced on May 12, 2021 by Senator Richard Blumenthal and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 5203 The Ejiao Act

This bill To prohibit the sale or transport of ejiao made using donkey skin in interstate or foreign commerce.

Status: Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA) introduced H.R. 5203 on September 10, 2021. It was referred to the to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 5828 Pets Belong with Families Act

H.R. 5828 would amend the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 to prohibit public housing agencies from imposing breed specific restrictions on pets owned by families living in public housing.

Status: H.R. 5828 was introduced by Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) on November 2, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Financial Services.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 5999/S. 3220 Traveling Exotic Animal and Public Safety Protection Act of 2021

H.R. 5999/S. 3220 would amend the Animal Welfare Act to prohibit the use of wild or exotic animals in traveling entertainment acts such as parades, circuses, and petting zoos. The legislation would not apply to domestic or farm animals or zoos/aquariums, wildlife sanctuaries, research facilities, laboratories, and universities.

Status: H.R. 5999 was introduced by Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) and S.3220 was introduced by Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) on November 17, 2021. H.R. 5999 was referred to the House Committee on Agriculture and S. 3220 was referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 8432 /S. 3678 Beagle Brigade Act of 2022

The Beagle Brigade Act of 2022 would formerly authorize the USDA National Detector Dog Training Center (the Center), which trains all canine teams (the Beagle Brigade) used in screening of border crossings, airports, ship ports, cargo warehouses and mail facilities. The Center would receive regular funding from Congress. In addition, the bill formalizes duties of the Center and requires USDA APHIS to submit a report one year after its enactment describing the utility of the Center in protecting U.S. agriculture and natural resources from disease threats, as well as recommendations for improvement.

Status: H.R. 8432 was introduced by Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-GA) on July 20, 2022 and was referred to the Committee on Agriculture. S. 3678 was introduced by Sens. Warnock (D- GA) and Ernst (R- IA) on February 17, 2022 and was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry..

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Lindsey Hornickel

H.R. 6341/S. 4005 Protecting Horses from Soring Act

This bill revises requirements concerning the inspection of horse shows, exhibitions, sales, and actions for sored horses (e.g., horses suffering from pain when moving due to substances or devices placed on their limbs). Specifically, this bill replaces a requirement for the Department of Agriculture to prescribe regulations governing the appointment of inspectors with a requirement for the Horse Industry Organization, which is established by this bill, to appoint inspectors.

Status: H.R. 6341 was introduced by Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-TN) on December 23, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. S. 4005 was introduced by Sen. Bill Hagerty (R-TN) on April 5, 2022 and referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 4421/S. 2332 Farm Systems Reform Act of 2021

This bill places a moratorium on large concentrated animal feeding operations; requires country-of-origin labeling for beef, pork, and dairy products; and otherwise revises provisions related to the marketing of livestock, poultry, and meat.

Status: H.R. 4421 was introduced by Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) on July 13, 2021 and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment, and Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture. S. 2332 was introduced by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) July 13, 2021 and was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Lindsey Hornickel

H.R. 5441/S. 2295 Prevent All Soring Tactics or PAST Act of 2021

This bill addresses the practice of soring horses. The soring of horses includes various actions taken on horses' limbs to produce higher gaits that may cause pain, distress, inflammation, or lameness. Specifically, the bill expands soring regulation and enforcement at horse shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions, including by establishing a new system for inspecting horses for soring. In addition, the bill increases penalties for violations.

Status: H. R 5441 was introduced by Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN) on September 30, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee. S. 2295 was introduced by Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) on June 24, 2021 and referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

H.R. 7004 Pigs in Gestation Stalls Act or PIGS Act

H.R. 7004 would amend the Animal Welfare Act by adding language which would prohibit breeding pigs from being confined in any enclosure in which they cannot lie down, turn in a circle, or stand and require each pig have 24 square feet of floor space. The bill also authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial assistance to pork producers for compliance expenses.

Status: H.R. 7004 was introduced By Reps. Veronica Escobar (D-TX) and Nancy Mace (R-SC) on March 9, 2022, and referred to the House Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Whitney Tyler

Food-related Issues**H.R. 397 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: H.R. 397 was introduced by Rep. Carlos Gimenez(R-FL) on January 21, 2021 and it was referred to the House Committee on Homeland Security. H.R. 397 was considered under suspension of the rules and passed by voice vote on April 20, 2021. On April 22, 2021 it was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Dr. Lindsey Hornickel

Pharmaceutical Issues**Prescription Mandate Legislation/Fairness to Pet Owners Act**

This legislation would create a new federal mandate for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to require a veterinarian to automatically release a “copy” of a prescription every time they determine it appropriate to dispense a prescription drug. 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. The veterinarian may not require payment for the prescription, require the pet owner to sign a waiver or disclaim liability.

Status: Not yet introduced in 117th Congress.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Lindsey Hornickel

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. 2866/S. 1371 America Grows Act

Authorizes a 5% annual funding increase 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. 2866 was introduced by Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-IL) on April 28, 2021 and referred to the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on the Budget. S. 1371 was introduced by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) on April 26, 2021 and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 1905 Alternatives to Animals for Regulatory Fairness Act (AARF Act)

This bill would amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act by adding language to allow new applications for drug approval to use non-animal testing for purposes of demonstrating safety and efficacy of a drug if the approach meets the FDA requirements of the applicable statutes and regulations.

Status: H.R. 1905 was introduced by Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA) on March 16, 2021 and was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Dr. Lindsey Hornickel

Small Business Issues

H.R. 2954 Securing a Strong Retirement Act (SECURE ACT 2.0); S. 1770 Retirement Security & Savings Act

This legislation will:

- Promote savings earlier for retirement by enrolling employees automatically in their company’s 401(k) plan, when a new plan is created;
- Create a new financial incentive for small businesses to offer retirement plans;
- Direct the Internal Revenue Service to promote the Saver’s Credit to increase utilization;
- Expand retirement savings options for non-profit employees by allowing groups of non-profits to join together to offer retirement plans to their employees;
- Allow individuals to save for retirement longer by increasing the required minimum distribution age to 75;
- Offer individuals ages 62, 63 and 64 more flexibility to set aside savings as they approach retirement;
- Allow individuals to pay down a student loan instead of contributing to a 401(k) plan and still receive an employer match in their retirement plan;

- Make it easier for military spouses who change jobs frequently to save for retirement;
- Allow individuals more flexibility to make gifts to charity through their IRAs;
- Allow taxpayers to avoid harsh penalties for inadvertent errors managing an IRA that can lead to a loss of retirement savings;
- Protect retirees who unknowingly receive retirement plan overpayments; and
- Make it easier for employees to find lost retirement accounts by creating a national, online, database of lost accounts.

Status: H.R. 2954 was introduced by Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA) and Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX) on May 4, 2021 and referred to the House Committees on Ways and Means, Financial Services, and Education and Labor. On May 5, 2021 the bill was reported out of the Ways and Means Committee by a voice vote. On May 21, 2021 Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Ben Cardin (R-MD) introduced a similar bill to the SECURE Act 2.0 entitled Retirement Security & Savings Act (S. 1770). This bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 4547/S. 896 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. 4547 was introduced by Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI) on July 20, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. S. 896 was introduced by Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) on March 23, 2021 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

Tax Issues

H.R. 2447/S. 2215 Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act

This legislation would exclude VMLRP awards from gross income, thus ending the federal taxation of these awards. Because the VMLRP is currently paying the withholding for the tax on behalf of recipients, ending the tax would allow more VMLRP funds to be used for awards and increase the number of veterinarians that could participate in the program.

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 2020, USDA

offered executed 552 VMLRP awards to veterinarians; meanwhile over 1,632 veterinarians applied to the program during the same time frame.

Status: H.R. 2447 was introduced by Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) and Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE) on April 12, 2021 and referred to the House Ways and Means Committee. S. 2215 was introduced on June 24, 2021 by Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Senator Mike Crapo (R-ID) and referred to the Committee on Finance. (All Actions)

Tracker:

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 1381/S. 480 Main Street Tax Certainty Act

The Main Street Tax Certainty Act makes permanent the small business tax deduction enacted in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA; P.L. 115-97). The deduction, known as 199A or the Qualified Business Income Deduction, is set to expire in 2025. Extension of the deduction is needed to maintain parity in the effective tax rates of C-corporations and S-corporations.

Status: H.R. 1381 was introduced by Reps. Jason Smith (R-MO) and Henry Cuellar (D-TX) on February 25, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. S. 480 was introduced Senator Steve Daines (R-MT) on February 25, 2021 and referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

S.994/H.R.2576 For the 99.5 Percent Act

Summary: The 99.5 Percent Act will:

- Exempt the first \$3.5 million of an individual's estate from the estate tax.
- Establish a new estate tax rate structure
- 45 percent of the value of an estate between \$3.5 million and \$10 million;
- 50 percent of the value of an estate between \$10 million and \$50 million;
- 55 percent of the value of an estate between \$50 million and \$1 billion; and
- 65 percent of the value of an estate in excess of \$1 billion.

Status: S.994 was introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-MA) on March 25, 2021 and referred to the Committee on Finance. On April 15, 2021, Rep. Jimmy Gomez (D-CA) introduced the House companion bill, which was referred to House Ways and Means Committee.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 2171/S. 905 Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act

H.R. 5339 amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow the use of funds in a qualified tuition program, known as a "529 education savings account", to pay for expenses associated with obtaining or maintaining recognized postsecondary credentials

Tuition, fees, books, supplies and equipment required to enroll in or attend a program that prepares individuals for professional certification, as well as any fees charged by certification programs would be eligible expenses.

Status: H.R. 2171 was introduced by Reps. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Fred Upton (R-MI) on March 23, 2021 and referred to the Committee on Ways and Means. S. 905 was introduced by Senator Klobuchar (D-MN) and Senator Mike Braun (R-IN) and referred to the Committee on Finance.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

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.

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: Not yet introduced.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

Veterinary Education and Training Minimizes Educational Debt Act “VET MED Act”

The VET MED Act would allow for the deferment of loan payments and interest accumulation on student loans while a veterinarian is pursuing additional training in a PhD program, residency, or internship.

Status: Not yet introduced

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 1372/S. 210 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. 1372 was introduced by Rep. Deborah Ross(D-NC) and rep. Carlos Gimenez(R-FL) on February 25, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. S. 210 was introduced by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) on February 3, 2021 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

S.847 Student Loan Tax Elimination Act of 2019

This legislation would remove federal student loan origination fees.

Status: S. 847 was introduced by Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN) and Sen. Krysten Sinema (D-AZ) on March 18, 2021 and referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 2160 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) on March 23, 2021 and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 2460/S.1098 Joint Consolidation Loan Separation Act

This 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. 2460 was introduced by Rep. David Price (D-NC) on April 13, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. On that same day, Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) introduced the Senate companion bill, which was referred to Senate HELP Committee.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 4631 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. 4631 was introduced by Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA) on July 22, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 4724/S.2478 Strengthening Loan Forgiveness for Public Servants Act

This bill revises the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program to provide for partial loan cancellation based on the length of public service employment.

Specifically, the bill directs the Department of Education (ED) to cancel 15%, 15%, 20%, 20%, and 30% of the amount a borrower owes after 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 years of public service employment, respectively, on Federal Direct Loans made after the bill's enactment. Under the current PSLF program, ED must cancel the balance of interest and principal due on a borrower's Federal Direct Loans after the borrower makes 120 monthly loan payments while employed in a public service job.

Status: H.R. 4724 was introduced by Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-CA) on July 27, 2021 and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor. S. 2478 was introduced by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) on July 27, 2021 and referred to the Senate HELP Committee.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R.7465 PSLF Payment Completion Fairness Act

This bill removes the requirement that a borrower must be employed in a public service job at the time of loan forgiveness under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program.

Status: The PSLF Payment Completion Fairness Act was introduced by Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA) on April 7, 2022, and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 4726 Student Loan Interest Deduction Act

This bill modifies the tax deduction for student loan interest to (1) 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 (2) repeal the limitation on the deduction based upon modified adjusted gross income.

Status: H.R. 4726 was introduced by Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-CA) on July 27, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R. 3147 Restoring Board Immunity (RBI) Act of 2021

The legislation would establish a limited antitrust exemption to incentivize states to reform occupational regulations that can create barriers to employment and add to consumer costs. States could establish a state office of supervision of occupational boards to oversee occupational boards' activities, or instead use a cause of action under state law to trigger judicial review of licensing laws under an intermediate scrutiny standard.

Status: H.R. 3147 was introduced by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) on May 12, 2021 and referred to the House Committee on Judiciary.

AVMA Position: Nonsupport

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

H.R.5602/S. 3244, the BIO Preparedness Workforce Act of 2021

This bill establishes a student loan repayment program for health care and related professionals who are engaged in either bio-preparedness and response activities or infectious disease care in underserved communities. For each year that a professional meets the work requirements of the program, the Health Resources and Services Administration may pay up to \$50,000 of the professional's student loan principal and interest, up to a maximum amount of \$150,000.

Status: H.R. 5602 was introduced by Reps. Lori Trahan (D-MA) and David McKinley (R-WV) on October 15, 2021 and referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. S. 3244 was introduced by Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) on November 18, 2021 and referred to the Senate HELP Committee. On October 26, 2021, the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee held a hearing on the Bolstering Infectious Outbreaks (BIO) Preparedness Workforce Act.

AVMA Position: Support

Primary Contact: Kevin Hartley

Monitoring

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

- **S. 107 New Markets for State-Inspected Meat and Poultry Act:** The legislation permits meat and poultry products that are inspected by USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) approved state Meat and Poultry Inspection (MPI) programs be sold across state lines. It does not explicitly allow for the export of these products, although theoretically the legislation could allow for a foreign nation to work directly with a state.
- **H.R. 1442 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. 1625 Agricultural Intelligence Measures Act:** The bill would establish a new Office of Intelligence in the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), with a director appointed by the Secretary of AG. The purpose is to leverage the capabilities of the intelligence community and related-research to ensure that the USDA Secretary is informed of threats to US agriculture, specifically threats to steal US agriculture knowledge and technology and/or develop biological warfare attacks or sabotage or disruption to the US agriculture.
- **H.R. 841 Hemp and Hemp-Derived CBD Consumer Protection and Market Stabilization Act of 2021; S. 1698 Hemp Access and Consumer Safety Act** Would allow hemp and all its cannabinoids (except THC) to be marketed as and subject to all the other U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations as for any other dietary supplement. It would direct FDA to use its authority to develop a clear and robust federal regulatory framework for these products.
- **S.2039 Tougher Enforcement Against Monopolies (TEAM) Act:** To purportedly improve the antitrust laws, and for other purposes.
- **H.R. 4180 or Keeping Pets and Families Together Act:** This legislation would amend the Animal Welfare Act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to award grants to support the microchipping of dogs and cats in the care of animal shelters or similar establishments
- **H.R. 3297 Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program** would promote the recruitment of public health professionals at local, state, and tribal public health agencies. To be eligible for the program, individuals must be in their final year of pursuing a public health or health professions degree or certificate or have graduated within the past 10 years and go on to work for a local, state, or tribal public health agency. The bill also stipulates that individuals accepted into the program must sign a service commitment for at least three years.
- **H.R. 6100 Goldie's Act** would amend the Animal Welfare Act to increase enforcement and penalties for violations. It would require the USDA to conduct more inspections with detailed descriptions of violations and follow-up until each violation is corrected. Animals determined to be suffering from physical or psychological harm by inspectors must be confiscated or euthanized. Copies of any violations found during an inspection must be shared with local law enforcement within 24 hours. Penalties must be calculated per animal and per violation and the USDA must establish penalty guidelines for violations and verify compliance. No penalties will be imposed until a person receives notice and the opportunity for a hearing which must take place within 21 days of the delivery of the notice.

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](#).