

Legislative Agenda for 116th Congress (2019-2020)

Appropriations for FY 2021

United States Department of Agriculture

Veterinary Services Grant Program (Sect. 7104 of the Agriculture Act of 2014) - \$3 million

The program was funded for the first time in FY 2016, at \$2.5 million. The Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP) will help relieve federally designated veterinary shortage situations by supporting private veterinary practices engaged in public health activities and veterinarians who are participating in or have successfully completed a Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) contract or similar state program. VSGP complements the VMLRP by helping large animal veterinarians become established in rural communities.

Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) - \$9 million

The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) is a student loan repayment program for veterinarians who practice in underserved areas. Loan repayment is essential to address shortages of veterinarians practicing food supply medicine and public health.

VMLRP incentivizes specialization in food animal medicine, food safety and public health. Continued funding will permit the USDA to select veterinarians who will agree to practice food supply medicine and veterinary public health in federally designated veterinary shortage situations.

Fighting Antimicrobial Resistance

- **CDC's Antibiotic Resistance Solutions Initiative (\$186 million):** The amount contained in the House Labor HHS appropriations bill for FY 2020.
- **FDA's Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria (\$41 million):** The Animal Drugs and Feeds Program will work to address public health safety concerns associated with antimicrobial drug use in animals and to better protect antibiotic effectiveness for both human and animal populations.
- Additionally, we ask that the FY20 Agriculture Appropriations bill include at least **\$77 million** for the **USDA** for antimicrobial resistance-related research, monitoring and surveillance.

Section 1433 Formula Funds for Animal Health and Research - \$10 million

Animal Health and Disease Research funds provide essential support for research on diseases affecting food-producing animals. These funds are the most important source of research support for departments of veterinary science at U.S. universities.

In the Agriculture Act of 2014 (PL 113-79) this program was expanded to include a competitive grants component that focuses on food security, One Health, and stewardship. The AAVMC would like to see much more robust funding for this critical program expansion.

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) - \$460 million

AFRI grants support research, education, and extension and integrated initiatives addressing issues of national, regional and multi-state importance to the safety, sustainability, and quality of American agriculture, including farm efficiency and profitability, ranching, renewable energy, forestry (both urban and agroforestry), aquaculture, rural communities and entrepreneurship, human nutrition, food safety, biotechnology, and conventional breeding.

National Animal Health Laboratory Network – \$20 million

The National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) infrastructure plays a critical role in rapidly detecting and responding to foreign and domestic disease outbreaks and animal health emergencies that threaten our nation's food supply and public health.

Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD) – \$2.5 million

FARAD is a congressionally-mandated risk-management program that is supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). FARAD's focus is limited to food animal species exclusively. The program is maintained by a consortium of universities, including University of California-Davis (UCD), University of Florida (UF), Kansas State University (KSU) and North Carolina State University (NCSU). FARAD's primary mission is to prevent or mitigate illegal or harmful residues of drugs, pesticides, bio-toxins and other chemical agents that may contaminate foods of animal origin.

National Institutes of Health - \$42.1 billion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the nation's federal health research agency, and the premier government-funded research agency worldwide. Nearly ninety percent of NIH funding flows to universities and other research institutions in the form of competitive grants.

Health Resources Services Administration

Title VII and VIII Health Professions Workforce Programs--\$680 million

The health professions programs, authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act provide education and training opportunities to a wide variety of health care professionals and

students. By educating and training an array of health professionals in interdisciplinary, community-based settings, the Title VII programs enhance the supply, diversity, and distribution of the workforce and address the deficits in the supply of health professionals.

Academic veterinary medical Institutions benefit from Title VII and VIII public health and preventive medicine programs that help address the growing shortages of public health professionals. Additionally, a public health loan repayment program will provide incentives for students to pursue public health careers.

Section 3151, Title 7, PL 115-334 (Farm Bill) Grants to enhance research capacity in schools of veterinary medicine

This section was passed within the 2018 Farm Bill. The legislation states that “The Secretary shall conduct a program of competitive grants to States for the purpose of meeting the costs of renovation, improving compliance with Federal regulations, employing faculty, acquiring equipment, and taking other action related to the improvement of schools of veterinary medicine to ensure agricultural competitiveness on a worldwide basis.” To date, no funds have been appropriated for this section, though we continue to monitor the relevant committees, and advocate for funding.

Current Status: FY 2021 Appropriations are currently being considered in the House and Senate. The expectation is that there will be at least one Continuing Resolution (CR) that may run until late December or even into 2021.

Congressional Actions/Legislation

HR 4674, The College Affordability Act- Monitoring

This is the House Democrats version of Higher Education Act Reauthorization. The bill would increase the value of Pell Grants, reinstate many of the gainful employment rules from the Obama administration, increase and reauthorize mandatory funding for HBCUs and make many other changes to student loan and student grant aid programs.

Current Status: The bill was markup up on October 29 in the House Education and Labor Committee, and it was passed out of the full committee on a party line vote of 28-22. AAVMC was happy that PSLF was protected in the legislation but we, along with APLU, found other parts of the bill problematic, including some of the accountability provisions. The Senate HELP Committee has not introduced similar comprehensive legislation, and is not expected to be able to do so during this Congress.

HR 4714/S 2458, The America Grows Act – SUPPORT

This legislation would authorize a five percent, inflation adjusted annual increase for the next five years for agricultural research at four USDA agencies: The National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Current status: The bills were both introduced in October of 2019. AAVMC is a part of several coalitions supporting the bills, and we are actively gathering co-sponsors for them. This was one of our three key requests during Advocacy Day in March

HR 2746/S 1163, Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act - SUPPORT

Each of these bills would amend the Internal Revenue Code to make VMLRP awards exempt from gross income and employment taxes. Awards are currently taxed at 39 percent. Those taxes are paid by USDA directly to the Treasury on behalf of the award recipient. Tax exemption for VMLRP awards would result in one additional veterinarian for every three based on current appropriations.

Current Status: 14 Co-sponsors in the House, 16 in the Senate. This bill needs a larger tax bill to “ride” on as an amendment. We continue to look for that vehicle.

HR 3771/S 1903, The Advancing Emergency Preparedness Through One Health Act 2019- SUPPORT

These bills would protect animal and public health by encouraging federal agencies to adopt a “One Health” framework to better prepare for and protect against disease outbreaks. Sens. Tina Smith (D-Minn.) and Todd Young (R-Ind.) have introduced the Senate version of this bill, while Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL) introduced the House version. Schrader and Yoho are both DVMs, and co-chair the House Veterinary Medicine Caucus. This legislation will advance the One Health framework to further the goal of protecting public health, animal health and environmental health.

Current Status: The House bill has 3 cosponsors, the same as the Senate bill. AAVMC is part of a larger coalition that is designed to garner support for this legislation.

S 1657, Ticks: Identify, Control and Knockout (TICK) Act of 2019 - SUPPORT

Introduced by Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN) and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), the act establishes an Office of Oversight and Coordination at HHS to develop a national strategy for tick-borne diseases. It also reauthorizes regional Centers of Excellence in Vector-Borne Disease, and it

authorizes grants of \$20 million per year from FY 2021-2026 to state health departments to combat and control ticks.

Current Status: Recently introduced in the Senate, no current companion bill in the House. The Senate bill has 3 cosponsors.

HR 6134, The Veterinary Education and Training Minimizes Educational Debt (VET MED) Act. -- SUPPORT

This legislation would allow veterinary students in residency programs to be eligible for interest-free deferment of their student loans during their residency. The legislation was introduced by Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL), the co-chairs of the Veterinary Medicine Caucus in the House.

Current Status: The legislation has been introduced in the House. AAVMC and AVMA have been working to garner sponsors and gain companion legislation in the Senate.

HR 5, The Equality Act of 2019—SUPPORT

The Equality Act of 2019 would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include protections that ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, public education, federal funding, credit, and the jury system. The bill was introduced by Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI) in the House, and Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) in the Senate.

Current Status: Passed the House of Representatives on May 17, 236-173. Has been forwarded to the Senate, but is not expected to be considered in this Congress.

HR 7308, The Research Investment to Spark the Economy (RISE) Act – SUPPORT

This bipartisan legislation was introduced as a direct result of the pandemic shutdown, and the impact that it has had on research facilities. The bill would authorize \$26 billion in emergency relief appropriations for federal science agencies during FY 2020 and FY 2021, and is available for expenditure for up to two years. It also affords temporary regulatory relief to science agencies until universities and non-profit research institutes can safely reopen research laboratories funded by federal appropriations.

Current Status: The legislation was just introduced in the House in June of 2020. It is supported by more than 140 higher education, research and industry groups, including AAVMC.

Executive Branch Activities

Implementation of USDA's Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP) and oversight of the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP)

In light of the decision to move USDA/NIFA to Kansas City, AAVMC and AVMA have expressed serious concerns that there may not be adequate staffing to manage these key programs in the next fiscal year. We have had ongoing conversations with Bob Smith and others who remain at USDA and currently managing the programs, and they have also expressed concerns to us. AAVMC is encouraging all of our institutions, in particular Kansas State University and the University of Missouri, to work with USDA to fill these open positions with qualified individuals as quickly as possible, so that our programs are not disrupted.

Implementation of the PCAST Report on Antibiotic Resistance

Several years ago, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) released a report entitled "Combating Antibiotic Resistance" which laid out several recommendations to address the problem. President Obama also issued an executive order directing various federal agencies and departments to develop a specific action plan by mid-February of 2014 that would address antibiotic resistance and protect public health.

As a result of these actions, the AAVMC, together with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), created the Task Force on Antibiotic Resistance in Production Agriculture. The goal of the task force was to advise the federal government on a research agenda and to help publicly disseminate information on the judicious use of antibiotics in production agriculture. The task force was a collaborative effort whose members are well-positioned to advise the Obama administration as it considers strategies for addressing the serious public health threat posed by antimicrobial resistance. The task force issued this report in late 2015: <http://www.aplu.org/library/addressing-antibiotic-resistance/file>

One of the direct outcomes of this task force was the creation of NIAMRRE, the National Institute of Antimicrobial Resistance Research and Education. <https://www.nationalamrinstitute.org/>

AAVMC continues to be involved in assisting NIAMRRE staff and coordinating government relations activities with the Institute and its partners.

Support rational regulation for gene-edited food animals

As a result of scientific advances such as CRISPR and other technologies, research into gene editing has been advancing at a fast pace, including at many AAVMC member institutions. As a result of concerns raised about the regulation of this research, AAVMC and APLU convened the

first Summit on Gene Editing in Food Animals at the AAVMC offices on September 24-25, 2019. <https://web.cvent.com/event/129b7fed-5f6a-4fce-8ac0-eb055cbe76d6/>

The next steps for this effort include a summary document to be released in the coming weeks. A joint AAVMC/APLU task force to further study this issue has also been created. As a direct result of the Summit, AAVMC and our partners have been invited to directly participate with FDA, BIO and others as they move forward on regulating this technology.

Support the White House Global Health Security Agenda

In 2014, 44 participating countries developed 11 Action Packages in support of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA). They are designed to outline steps to prevent outbreaks, detect threats in real time, and rapidly respond to infectious disease threats. We believe strongly that academic veterinary medicine can and must play a central role in this agenda, which puts a priority on areas including combating antibiotic resistant bacteria, improving biosafety and biosecurity on a global basis, and preventing bioterrorism. There are three main areas of funding for this agenda, including: CDC Global Health Strategy, USAID Global Health Initiative, and the Fogarty International Center at NIH.

Educate Federal Agency Leadership on the Full Spectrum of Academic Veterinary Medicine

The AAVMC works hard to ensure that its audience on Capitol Hill and federal agencies understand that the impact of veterinary medicine on human health and wellbeing is far greater than the provision of clinical care for food and companion animals. AAVMC members and representatives will continue to champion the “One Health Initiative” to expand interdisciplinary collaborations in all aspects of health care for humans, animals and the environment.

AAVMC staff will also continue to work to establish stronger, ongoing relationships with staff within several federal agencies, initially concentrating on NIH but eventually moving to other agencies as well.

Expand the pool of biomedical postdoctoral fellowships and ensure that veterinary biomedical postdoctoral researchers have the same opportunities for loan repayment afforded to other health professionals at NIH

The AAVMC will work with NIH to expand the shrinking pool of postdoctoral training opportunities. The AAVMC will also work to ensure that veterinary graduates have the same opportunities to compete for the existing positions available to other health professionals. The FY 2016 Labor HHS Appropriations bills included report language directing NIH to continue to publicize the program to potential applicants throughout all of the institutes and centers at AAVMC’s request.

Increase the opportunities for AAVMC members to participate in HRSA's diversity training programs

AAVMC member institutions are eligible to participate in the Title VII diversity programs, including the Centers of Excellence (COE) program, the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), the Minority Faculty Fellowship Program and the Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students Program. These programs are critical to building workforce capacity, but AAVMC member institutions participate in these programs on a limited basis. The AAVMC must educate HRSA leadership on the role the veterinary workforce plays in public health and preventing disease outbreaks. AAVMC will provide input to HRSA as guidance documents are developed and assistance to AAVMC member institutions in crafting high-quality applications.

Explore opportunities to participate in the HRSA Public Health and Preventive Medicine programs

Given the impact veterinary medicine has on public health and disease prevention, members should be connected to these programs. Both the Public Health Traineeships and Public Health Training Centers fund schools of public health and other programs that provide training in public health. If there are barriers that prohibit AAVMC member participation, they should be addressed with HRSA leadership.