



Welfare & Public Policy Advisory Council Report

Committee Name:	Welfare and Public Policy Advisory Council	Quarter/Year:	2025
Prepared by:	Drs. Bart Sutherland and Ashley Morgan	Date Submitted:	11/20/2025

Chair – Dr. Bart Sutherland

Board Liaison – Dr. Tegan Easton

Staff Liaison – Ashley Morgan

Committee Charge:

To monitor welfare issues and matters of public policy in both the equine industry and veterinary profession for the purposes of advising AAEP leadership on such matters as well as to make recommendations on a particular course of action by the association.

This Committee is:

- ☒ Reporting with no board action required
- ☐ Recommending board action or a policy change (add information below)

Summary of Activities/Issues/Decisions/Accomplishments:

Review of AAEP Position Statements

Reviewed and recommended updates to the following AAEP position statements:

- Equine Dentistry
- Management of Bureau of Land Management Wild Horses and Burros
- Thermocautery or Pin Firing
- Use of Hog Rings
- Use of Horses in Urban Environments
- Use of Vesicants

Social License to Operate

Spearheaded a webinar in July on social license to operate (SLO) featuring Dr. Camie Heleski with a focus on advancing understanding of SLO among members, and offering tools to communicate effectively with the public and safeguard the profession's ability to serve horses.

Midlevel Practitioner

A Midlevel Practitioner Task Force was convened last year to evaluate and respond to proposals regarding the creation of a midlevel veterinary practitioner role. Over the course of the year,

the task force met regularly to analyze the issue, align on messaging, and lead targeted outreach efforts. These efforts focused on educating AAEP members, engaging stakeholders, and supporting advocacy at the state level—particularly in Colorado, where the issue was actively under consideration. As a result, the AAEP:

- Strengthened opposition position statement on the creation of a Mid-Level Veterinary Practitioner (MLP) / Veterinary Professional Association (VPA).
- Assisted Colorado-based AAEP members in drafting and publishing op-eds in local media outlets to elevate awareness and articulate concerns.
- Developed and disseminated an informational e-blast to AAEP members in Colorado, providing timely updates and advocacy resources.
- Created and shared infographics and messaging with AAEP members in Colorado for use on social platforms to enhance public and peer engagement.
- Published Educational Article authored by Dr. Jim Zeff in *Equine Veterinary Education* following the formal vote in Colorado, providing context on the issue and outlining its potential implications for other states.
- Hosted a strategic meeting of stakeholders at the 2024 AAEP Annual Convention, including task force members, council representatives, AVMA, and AAEP members active in state-level advocacy.
- Distributed materials and educational resources to equine faculty at colleges of veterinary medicine and AAEP student members with an aim for these resources to inform and empower faculty and students to engage with their peers and administration on the midlevel practitioner issue.

Welfare of Racehorses in Caribbean

The Council recommended, and the Board approved, allocation of resources—professional expertise and staff time—to develop a focused plan of engagement with appropriate stakeholders, with the goal of improving veterinary oversight, racing safety, and aftercare for Thoroughbreds in the Caribbean. A Working Group is being established and AAEP leaders will possibly meet with appropriate stakeholders in Puerto Rico during the 2026 Resort Symposium.

Legislation:

H.R. 1266 /S. 545 - Combating Illicit Xylazine Act

To prohibit certain uses of xylazine, and for other purposes.

AAEP Position – Support

H.R. 1266 – Introduced 02/12/25 by Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA-19)

Committees: House – Energy and Commerce, Judiciary

Latest Action: House – 02/12/2025 Referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Committee on the Judiciary.

- Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 89 (52 Reps / 37 Dems)
- *Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 100 (45 Reps / 55 Dems)*

S.545 – Introduced 02/12/25 by Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV)

Committees: Senate – Judiciary

Latest Action: Senate – 02/12/2025 Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

- Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 27 (13 Reps / 13 Dems / 1 Independent)
- *Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 30 (15 Reps / 15 Dems)*

H.R. 5544 - Ejiao Act

To prohibit the transportation, sale, and purchase of donkeys or donkey hides for the purpose of producing ejiao, to prohibit the transportation, sale, and purchase of products containing ejiao, and for other purposes.

AAEP Position - Support

H.R. 5544 – Introduced 09/23/25 by Rep. Donald Beyer (D-VA-8)

Committees: House – Committee on Ways and Means, Natural Resources, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, and the Judiciary

Latest Action: House – 09/23/25 Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, Natural Resources, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, and the Judiciary

Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 1 (1 Dems)

Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 14 (10 Dems / 4 Reps)

H.R. 1684 - Prevent All Soring Tactics Act of 2025 (PAST Act)

To amend the Horse Protection Act to designate additional unlawful acts under the Act, strengthen penalties for violations of the Act, improve Department of Agriculture enforcement of the Act, and for other purposes.

AAEP Position – Support

H.R. 1684 – Introduced 02/27/25 by Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-11)

Committees: House – Energy and Commerce

Latest Action: House – 02/27/2025 Referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

- Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 204 (179 Dems / 25 Reps)
- *Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 247 (207 Dems / 40 Reps)*
- *Cosponsors in 117th Congress: 262 (211 Dems / 51 Reps)*
- *Cosponsors in 116th Congress: PASSED the House by a vote of 333 - 96*
- *Cosponsors in 115th Congress: 284 (189 Dems / 95 Reps)*

H.R. 1661/S.775 - Save America's Forgotten Equines Act of 2025 (SAFE Act)

To amend the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 to prohibit the slaughter of equines for human consumption.

AAEP Position – Non-Support

H.R. 1661 – Introduced 02/27/25 by Rep. Vern Buchanan (R-FL-16)

Committees: House – Agriculture

Latest Action: House - 03/28/2025 Referred to the Committee on Agriculture's Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry.

- Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 184 (152 Dems / 32 Reps)

- *Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 235 (196 Dems / 39 Reps)*
- *Cosponsors in 117th Congress: 223 (194 Dems / 29 Reps)*
- *Cosponsors in 116th Congress: 237 (209 Dems / 28 Reps)*
- *Cosponsors in 115th Congress: 218 (172 Dems / 46 Reps)*

S. 775 – Introduced 02/27/25 by Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC)

Committees: Senate – Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

Latest Action: Senate - 02/27/2025 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

- *Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 4 (2 Reps / 2 Dems)*
- *Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 11 (6 Reps / 5 Dems)*
- *Cosponsors in 117th Congress: 6 (4 Reps / 2 Dems)*

H.R. 1675 - Protecting Horses from Soring Act of 2025

To amend the Horse Protection Act to provide increased protection for horses participating in shows, exhibitions, sales, and auctions, and for other purposes.

AAEP Position – Non-Support

H.R. 1675 – Introduced 02/27/25 by Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-TN-4)

Committees: House – Energy and Commerce

Latest Action: House – 02/27/2025 Referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

- *Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 1 (1 Rep)*
- *Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 1 (1 Rep)*
- *Cosponsors in 117th Congress: 8 (8 Reps)*

H.R. 3623 – Horse Transportation Safety Act of 2025

To prohibit the transportation of horses in interstate transportation in a motor vehicle containing 2 or more levels stacked on top of one another.

AAEP Position – Non-Support

H.R. 3623 – Introduced 05/29/25 by Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN-9)

Committees: House – Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Latest Action: House – 05/30/25 Referred to the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 24 (23 Dems / 1 Reps)

Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 77 (76 Dems / 1 Reps)

H.R. 4356 - Wild Horse and Burro Protection Act of 2025

To amend the Act commonly known as the Wild Free-roaming Horses and Burros Act to prohibit certain uses of aircraft with respect to the management of wild free-roaming horses and burros, and for other purposes.

AAEP Position – Non-Support

H.R. 4356 – Introduced 07/10/25 by Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV-1)

Committees: House – Committee on Natural Resources

Latest Action: House – 07/10/25 Referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 16 (14 Dems / 2 Reps)

Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 27 (22 Dems / 5 Reps)

H.R. 3378 - Racehorse Health and Safety Act of 2025

To protect the health and welfare of covered horses and improve the integrity and safety of horseracing by authorizing States to enter into an interstate compact to develop and enforce scientific medication control rules and racetrack safety rules that are uniform for each equine breed, and for other purposes.

AAEP Position – Non-Support

H.R. 3378 – Introduced 05/14/25 by Rep. Clay Higgins (R-LA-3)

Committees: House – Committee on Energy and Commerce

Latest Action: House – 05/14/25 Referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 3 (2 Dems / 1 Reps)

Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 4 (1 Dems / 3 Reps)

S.1377 - Theodore Roosevelt National Park Wild Horses Protection Act

To ensure the maintenance of a herd of horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and for other purposes.

AAEP Position – No Position

S.1377 – Introduces 04/09/25 by Sen. John Hoeven, John (Sen.-R-ND)

Committees: Senate - Energy and Natural Resources

Latest Action: Senate - 04/09/2025 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

- Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 1 (1 Rep)

H.R.2864 - Veterans for Mustangs Act

To amend the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to implement fertility controls to manage populations of wild free-roaming horses and burros, and to encourage training opportunities for military veterans to assist in range management activities, and for other purposes.

AAEP Position – No Position

H.R.2864 – Introduced 04/10/25 by Rep. Nancy Mace (R-SC-1)

Committees: House – Natural Resources

Latest Action: House – 04/10/2025 Referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

- Cosponsors in 119th Congress: 21 (12 Dems / 9 Reps)
- *Cosponsors in 118th Congress: 31 (17 Dems / 14 Reps)*

Agenda for December 2025 WPPAC meeting:

- BLM policy update and discussion
- Discuss utilization of advocacy network across country and within breed/discipline groups

- Update on Caribbean Racehorse Welfare Working Group
- Review online resources
- Discuss topical ideas for Virtual Wednesday roundtables

Recommendation for board action: No recommendation for Board action at this time.