**WEEK THREE LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

Week three of the Georgia Legislative Session saw more than just the security wall outside the Capitol under construction as appropriations sub-committees hammered out final details and the House passed the amended budget on Thursday. The "little budget" is now in the hands of the State Senate as they work to meet the funding needs of state agencies and the constituents that they serve.

New bills are being introduced each day and we are keeping a close watch on those of interest to agribusiness. Legislation impacting agriculture, the business community and rural development initiatives should continue to surface in the next week or two, so stay tuned.

We’ve provided a quick summary of action for you below, but there is much more to come in the weeks ahead.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/sys/S.gif | https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/sys/S.gif |

**UGA CAES DEAN VISITS GOLD DOME**

New UGA College of Agriculture Dean Nick Place was in Atlanta on Thursday meeting with legislators and other state leaders. Dean Place joined the University of Georgia as dean and director of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences on Jan. 1, 2021.

Place previously served as dean and director of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service and a professor in the University of Florida Department of Agricultural Education and Communication from 2012 through 2020.

﻿

Prior to speaking before the Senate Agriculture Committee, Dean Place took time to visit with our legislative interns to discuss their experience.

|  |
| --- |
| https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/1101116784221/S.gif |
| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | https://files.constantcontact.com/d2766818501/258b6daf-011c-4805-961f-fe5e1fbcda07.jpg | https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/sys/S.gif | | https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/sys/S.gif | https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/sys/S.gif |   **AMENDED BUDGET PASSED IN HOUSE**  The House of Representatives passed House Bill 80, the Supplemental Appropriations State budget for the fiscal year 20-21 during this week's legislative session. **Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Terry England,** led the discussion regarding the fiscal changes to the State budget. The balanced budget was amended, and funding was added predominately to areas in education, one-time expenditures, and emergency needs.  ﻿Highlights Include:   * 50% of the budget pertains to K-12, higher, and technical education * $20 million for rural broadband initiatives * Includes additional funds for the Hemp and medical cannabis programs * $748,448 Vehicle Replacement within the Department of Agriculture * Funding for State farmers markets in south GA including Savannah and Thomasville * $2,851,620 for the Agriculture Experiment Stations * $2,652,325 to Cooperative Extension Service received for operations * Full restoration for Ag education and technical education funds | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/1101116784221/S.gif | | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | | **COVID LIABILITY BILL INTRODUCED**  **Majority Whip, Trey Kelley** - Cedartown, submitted **HB 112** to extend the extremely important COVID-19 liability protections for Georgia businesses and hospitals that was passed last year. This legislation was a priority issue for GAC in 2020 and has continued to be as the pandemic rages on. The new protections would be extended until July 14, 2022, under the bill that has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. The liability protections have shielded businesses and health-care facilities in Georgia from lawsuits brought by people who contract COVID-19 in all but the worst negligence or recklessness cases. To read the full legislation, [**click here.**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001x9-IBu7sTS7xmlPKv25pkonOfCiU2O2S4rdIV-LOldu5Nv4d-CY0Rr_tAkszrGNN51i9_mYerKoxLAm7_XWa_vlDIR3V0kyyycOY1_qhdlMhSV6ykL15kBT8UIc5axlzGdP6RpQOZHaR47yJ2V8WN6e6A7_CU75sOAnjmjBzXMU=&c=N-jgNgUXC5FnkhmYo6hwjYTFhl0v3JZYUO6N8qurc3gZjUbhDKnxEw==&ch=doqdNJyKgI1oTYxdNf-zlXAriFwkjtg5_GqqwlLqzzFxf80sa_qE5Q==) | |
| |  | | --- | | **BILLS OF INTEREST**  **SENATE BILLS**  [**SB 29**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001x9-IBu7sTS7xmlPKv25pkonOfCiU2O2S4rdIV-LOldu5Nv4d-CY0Rr_tAkszrGNNa5dQpUzffZt2fJiQGnEU5DxFxgcJNGcDIULny0rHfloQYBcvEMScC8nCT7J8cN3YABp0x0gXwfXaapMcddyfWrPY2mGu5DcXnjRhyzi-_a0TmcLidGvJUgAH1RGHwuJiQG4WGdzq7-I3GbzQ0zVUogYBZC5wsjZAC-R1ZOK3v2Ev_hpNGb019KZTcIetjGm9i0xmRJ4i66dY1nA0LB-capJLXS4yClCfuRSNGqa1e8vfQYccvTrh4LoZfHQwPtzNbOK96lgIKUXsHIVVCbof0VjkMn6Q9RJk_4t8ymbdEkVPO8aqiGerbo-qKKnQN47rAJhSEK0og6drJhP2um8j3fHenPxjJ0TKIbWYaq3S5dtqHlrPaXJXJpixPcPESOM-XaClJzrAqcD1NsfA7o2ftJrzMaoWDbcvASbZ6UPstXdf3f8-csTW7fr9elq5WODycAnKwgSgQDKmvM7pmYJs75iZtZganl9llCv0MmIlnjJjXceyK95wUm7NrLtbUwt35O_cQIOfdIOxGdtsNftjxzErUpi0r9XFb4yMgqpuUmArrCQ2Sw3uHJDYWId-5T-Yg0xUCTF-_Ri-apwGthlnWgFK6ySJ-sxOkTXIcpqGWgyBrCYyxHk_QLJ6N1JI_9MqO2jhfUJYcr_DnrbTvFrQr46Q45p_C7C99Jq0Y7gkye805y-Um9hWQgN6bryTVLw2PlrcGZGoZYwU9e3fMmqGwz2hxLWf_O-lF2LOOZUmjMHNaWQRl0euBy9ApORFwYbAKycwpbbhqIBjHoOZlN62XdjnVs0ufmgxtbpud8IGUe58vRED3m6kbNvL1ffSwhOcVdkpUWRHpZ-U5sgmCL6TDDAe41cm2DdD&c=N-jgNgUXC5FnkhmYo6hwjYTFhl0v3JZYUO6N8qurc3gZjUbhDKnxEw==&ch=doqdNJyKgI1oTYxdNf-zlXAriFwkjtg5_GqqwlLqzzFxf80sa_qE5Q==): **Sen. Anavitarte** - Bill would require citizens who want to vote in a Georgia election by absentee ballot to include a copy of their driver's license, voter ID card, passport, or other official form of US identification when they apply for the absentee ballot and at the time of submittal. Assigned to **House Ethics Committee**    [**SB 30**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001x9-IBu7sTS7xmlPKv25pkonOfCiU2O2S4rdIV-LOldu5Nv4d-CY0Rr_tAkszrGNNgbsP5NaweM0ehRBv-PCT1e9D2_jDw8S0Dp26NPUkVddMapCUimrpoSPc0mRt9j-YKXSH2AE0TBp1NC20e0y0g7dEChu3YzwHqP-ON-SWodm73mhzztNgm7O0ojVIAxrvkiSlOYWh9Y3QrzHwowZlMMBZlOxUnBuOTdJB9Uas0zu1FozKJ02gueq7VgSj3ayU3JWDPE_S-Wwtgok9CwOuKJEuZt0oZ2O6Ytz7SePN1k_8U-Q0Va-taKvn6y0TVwViCUND22dEa4t14qD2e4XyKxG2jabWaihBcib4oZm3XD_hhHlDIPO8rkHSLS9j2t1umVDJXkXUdtGgWNZNLhiwo2e0aYAlFpNWqXzqpH8O6UmEaTSsXU07DQpwwnomOXT2pfgxOajKF1wgsDiv3U-RJuVNGvzHOeKOd08nzpwmD8VaWawr8MXNIYiPajQRkAdw3BxCq8vYKHD59Mzvglly0nwC8FebaTzZjEKpFUEi68UBnqMLUXwQeybnx9JbtU-cYf-t8Dmi4QzJIej89jWJRayaF7y1MyWIwXsr29VTaD-dex7ro78C1moIW70l-OUUfU-Qu3n1cFQra5mmaAlghCm-2Tjb4_kWxeg2n50FJ7mJsZnM--iVe3gQjpgqpVyMIi-E33Gz7X4jqwd2CGBQDr6OXbbkDZR7I28S_JNmXiFvwLCqjhuTyRXVNKonOp2-oi8afEepKUE2LFIMDON4p3weoJb4uQ3PzMrccqRWwe1kztEkX9-ipPn0K8l9_bNI2PjJlozht3Ep8A57JLDNwHBZcnpr286TlwwIrzHtA5WaN0y8RD60xC5v2tdgQJgYC_rYwRzg5PF7JqFubtZ4QA==&c=N-jgNgUXC5FnkhmYo6hwjYTFhl0v3JZYUO6N8qurc3gZjUbhDKnxEw==&ch=doqdNJyKgI1oTYxdNf-zlXAriFwkjtg5_GqqwlLqzzFxf80sa_qE5Q==)**:** **Sen. Beach** - SB 30 would provide for pari-mutuel horse racing in Georgia and would establish Georgia Horse Racing Commission. Assigned to **House Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee**  **HOUSE BILLS**  [**HB 98:**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001x9-IBu7sTS7xmlPKv25pkonOfCiU2O2S4rdIV-LOldu5Nv4d-CY0Rr_tAkszrGNNUIWrjMh1OpRHFlQ4C6cRplVQBHwbZBPDHyTyFeXAINGh81Zsozj9tCMEp1PJSRMUgRJ35UKfGUBkilmv78rJqL0rHWwf-5HE3bbhGtD_zJU=&c=N-jgNgUXC5FnkhmYo6hwjYTFhl0v3JZYUO6N8qurc3gZjUbhDKnxEw==&ch=doqdNJyKgI1oTYxdNf-zlXAriFwkjtg5_GqqwlLqzzFxf80sa_qE5Q==) **Rep. Eddie Lumsden** - bill would authorize counties and cities to conduct “public hearings” by teleconference during emergency conditions (e.g. pandemics). The policy would acknowledge that participation by teleconference would be equal to full in person participation as if those conducting the public hearing are physically present and members of the public must be afforded the means to participate fully in the same manner as if they were physically present. The legislation comes from several instances around the state where local municipalities struggled to conduct the business of their boards as quorums where not met because of health concerns of in person meetings. Assigned to **Government Affairs Committee.**    [**HB 104:**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001x9-IBu7sTS7xmlPKv25pkonOfCiU2O2S4rdIV-LOldu5Nv4d-CY0Rr_tAkszrGNNYtx7AR7N0TdeHN6OqerjmyqsKfi3GFHnucAJzxgvQP9sMrAcQVAlo-adF7Y2C7WxW1b3O6ob5491y9qRtJPg51k-73xXqTaGgA_5vD1bMvoYOsVOpDvkpnOmsjm_s34Ch5YhoJu8GgMTp-ZenQa7rb59XC2bUjxIkGdpmKaNY4Ng28lWYW15HBYzj-LrZDbyY4-b13EIZrNNIety7YAmgC4FDxl9-7WF_TyXN_FgMFaQm7LWs5x3lN_MCbFopd3H-RobjSehsMWpHq8VsKvl-6kxSGcUX1g0QwHnzIixGwVU2imQ-A_IigvzX2tXGVv0wJbW34-OaM9dCvUZIo3dZ7fNXg4c58cDo4VrtolGe_ZRiU3QvuCH_RWru5rPEpW4AxDnHeQJ65nDk67o1Wp0ZO9fTzA1ATS_qU_uJxysHOn4oOI1KlA-TbWXYEm3Jjp7MjzaettktCA5CamVDfFjafQQfSdNIemJc9J7DrcZBhB6t9G-2yC7gzmAl8ENbETy5J8NA7rsl427vFV9QJBe-m9GFI63qcSaYZaADM7D6MPqy3jYwSVk2v2kWu7PUlqdPq1zSFmZlVa2X7s21cCTGxWrT-2o57Jq4RjuRGt5gbQcbdAzKR_cBqoFz22rloKgAkUc3WW1Xunw6F8Mtf9Sv1Z6sjKSIykj4miYyVKyI81csDin5JGFPO3LCUj7r5F9SjoJkFSl341ax9WKGCa2sHKEmVeNUCXafKmLHF10HCfod7VCDaRwcmdSNOOcocxy24hKglhYzG0NEyAZI0kFtVxqGY5wEcmSyrPqmH9zXXj89D7kAYwfdrbEOWRHOFiw_0jS2wzdW5d5TYswyvCye0Z-vBepG8A5&c=N-jgNgUXC5FnkhmYo6hwjYTFhl0v3JZYUO6N8qurc3gZjUbhDKnxEw==&ch=doqdNJyKgI1oTYxdNf-zlXAriFwkjtg5_GqqwlLqzzFxf80sa_qE5Q==) **Rep. Stevens** - relating to specific, business, and occupation taxes, so as to levy and impose a tax on persons who enter certain rental agreements with certain equipment rental companies within a certain period of time; to require such equipment rental companies to collect such taxes and remit them to county tax commissioners for credit against such company's ad valorem tax liability for certain equipment; to provide that county tax commissioners shall retain excess fees; to provide for the reporting of certain statistical data related to such tax; to provide for rules and regulations; to provide for definitions; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes. Assigned to **Ways and Means**  [**HB 112:**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001x9-IBu7sTS7xmlPKv25pkonOfCiU2O2S4rdIV-LOldu5Nv4d-CY0Rr_tAkszrGNNYtx7AR7N0TdeHN6OqerjmyqsKfi3GFHnucAJzxgvQP9sMrAcQVAlo-adF7Y2C7WxW1b3O6ob5491y9qRtJPg51k-73xXqTaGgA_5vD1bMvoYOsVOpDvkpnOmsjm_s34Ch5YhoJu8GgMTp-ZenQa7rb59XC2bUjxIkGdpmKaNY4Ng28lWYW15HBYzj-LrZDbyY4-b13EIZrNNIety7YAmgC4FDxl9-7WF_TyXN_FgMFaQm7LWs5x3lN_MCbFopd3H-RobjSehsMWpHq8VsKvl-6kxSGcUX1g0QwHnzIixGwVU2imQ-A_IigvzX2tXGVv0wJbW34-OaM9dCvUZIo3dZ7fNXg4c58cDo4VrtolGe_ZRiU3QvuCH_RWru5rPEpW4AxDnHeQJ65nDk67o1Wp0ZO9fTzA1ATS_qU_uJxysHOn4oOI1KlA-TbWXYEm3Jjp7MjzaettktCA5CamVDfFjafQQfSdNIemJc9J7DrcZBhB6t9G-2yC7gzmAl8ENbETy5J8NA7rsl427vFV9QJBe-m9GFI63qcSaYZaADM7D6MPqy3jYwSVk2v2kWu7PUlqdPq1zSFmZlVa2X7s21cCTGxWrT-2o57Jq4RjuRGt5gbQcbdAzKR_cBqoFz22rloKgAkUc3WW1Xunw6F8Mtf9Sv1Z6sjKSIykj4miYyVKyI81csDin5JGFPO3LCUj7r5F9SjoJkFSl341ax9WKGCa2sHKEmVeNUCXafKmLHF10HCfod7VCDaRwcmdSNOOcocxy24hKglhYzG0NEyAZI0kFtVxqGY5wEcmSyrPqmH9zXXj89D7kAYwfdrbEOWRHOFiw_0jS2wzdW5d5TYswyvCye0Z-vBepG8A5&c=N-jgNgUXC5FnkhmYo6hwjYTFhl0v3JZYUO6N8qurc3gZjUbhDKnxEw==&ch=doqdNJyKgI1oTYxdNf-zlXAriFwkjtg5_GqqwlLqzzFxf80sa_qE5Q==) **Rep. Trey Kelley** - COVID-19 liability protections for Georgia businesses and hospitals would be extended until July 14, 2022, under a bill introduced in the General Assembly. Since August, the liability protections have shielded businesses and health-care facilities in Georgia from lawsuits brought by people who contract COVID-19 in all but the worst negligence or recklessness cases. The bill only calls for a one-year extension. Assigned to **Judiciary Committee**  [**HB 139**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001x9-IBu7sTS7xmlPKv25pkonOfCiU2O2S4rdIV-LOldu5Nv4d-CY0Rr_tAkszrGNNYtx7AR7N0TdeHN6OqerjmyqsKfi3GFHnucAJzxgvQP9sMrAcQVAlo-adF7Y2C7WxW1b3O6ob5491y9qRtJPg51k-73xXqTaGgA_5vD1bMvoYOsVOpDvkpnOmsjm_s34Ch5YhoJu8GgMTp-ZenQa7rb59XC2bUjxIkGdpmKaNY4Ng28lWYW15HBYzj-LrZDbyY4-b13EIZrNNIety7YAmgC4FDxl9-7WF_TyXN_FgMFaQm7LWs5x3lN_MCbFopd3H-RobjSehsMWpHq8VsKvl-6kxSGcUX1g0QwHnzIixGwVU2imQ-A_IigvzX2tXGVv0wJbW34-OaM9dCvUZIo3dZ7fNXg4c58cDo4VrtolGe_ZRiU3QvuCH_RWru5rPEpW4AxDnHeQJ65nDk67o1Wp0ZO9fTzA1ATS_qU_uJxysHOn4oOI1KlA-TbWXYEm3Jjp7MjzaettktCA5CamVDfFjafQQfSdNIemJc9J7DrcZBhB6t9G-2yC7gzmAl8ENbETy5J8NA7rsl427vFV9QJBe-m9GFI63qcSaYZaADM7D6MPqy3jYwSVk2v2kWu7PUlqdPq1zSFmZlVa2X7s21cCTGxWrT-2o57Jq4RjuRGt5gbQcbdAzKR_cBqoFz22rloKgAkUc3WW1Xunw6F8Mtf9Sv1Z6sjKSIykj4miYyVKyI81csDin5JGFPO3LCUj7r5F9SjoJkFSl341ax9WKGCa2sHKEmVeNUCXafKmLHF10HCfod7VCDaRwcmdSNOOcocxy24hKglhYzG0NEyAZI0kFtVxqGY5wEcmSyrPqmH9zXXj89D7kAYwfdrbEOWRHOFiw_0jS2wzdW5d5TYswyvCye0Z-vBepG8A5&c=N-jgNgUXC5FnkhmYo6hwjYTFhl0v3JZYUO6N8qurc3gZjUbhDKnxEw==&ch=doqdNJyKgI1oTYxdNf-zlXAriFwkjtg5_GqqwlLqzzFxf80sa_qE5Q==): **Rep Mainor** - This bill would prohibit trains from restricting traffic crossing for longer than 15 minutes except in emergency situations. Assigned to **House Transportation Committee**    [**HB 150**](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001x9-IBu7sTS7xmlPKv25pkonOfCiU2O2S4rdIV-LOldu5Nv4d-CY0Rr_tAkszrGNN7c_Nfju7sq4bRD4N0mq4YHGsXCF384j0z9zYYjS5jPqKarF08-xyXQnQRK14ff0fmDGVglLURplvrKrOHitAAqcmXw7dCPWz01dmk5R8JpWowlNSu_H3stHQosm-4AFccmXGWapjO3oc1ZgKRb8aZet5-_Yi-neSkMCmbGHIKLUfdgarnEx82dP8CdwDXV6OvdkJ376HegYHAuOZbOPS-hg1NotFiJujRLNIEMr42Ci932Q4RSxvjFOtyoEIZS4DuZZGNnqkZPw1_748YzQuwg3l_Sz9XMTh9aZFyQotAtYwtqeaN8F8MLYZjHTYO06V70cHOLJC7zs5McjlkyrP_47Dp58U_62gopb_EQoiciQpipzaoftnqyKtTftXI1WCL0Zp5RYCqMGf6pWYtEBxfweacwRaSEehauQR8SMOWkK3Gg5D3BYjDnIUbagtYY-mp7avkL3zkW4GYySfvInaJQ5TeIGaXJj7AFcaicynW9I57v0mb2hyoctArg1K7JY6LkFFcjCVHSG9bbfUo0-YDTbZ7Dkiejd6Kxg3Tc7BruIkYBe1w0jrWPsJW2adshczeXE1EP2RGw3t_zG9amEpTDcHx5S5jFR3FiqRpanEplomB9ppVth1Z0912YdyOt6WiLmaG3xB5naQAr1HGXYLQMf6Td_wt58-asJZ1wYHaWgjkaILXE4m1C9KmS_VJwFhKBKS7fqGEpBLFT2kQnR8PIsvycslyp-rFijgEAhjE0h_bv8oqqUGyVWUP_Zl5Q1FKzEEn-b01SXY4t9IZ5ADPvBbZ-Rl_GsZb43QIcp0AhoDnHZBR2gThcYGXDVH8ERsnpkiafW57RSM0P99-uPC4Q==&c=N-jgNgUXC5FnkhmYo6hwjYTFhl0v3JZYUO6N8qurc3gZjUbhDKnxEw==&ch=doqdNJyKgI1oTYxdNf-zlXAriFwkjtg5_GqqwlLqzzFxf80sa_qE5Q==)**:** **Reps. Williamson, Hatchett, Kelley, Frazier, Parsons, Smith** - **HB 150** would prohibit local government entities in Georgia from banning the connection of any utility service based on the type or source of fuel. Assigned to **House Energy, Utilities, and Telecommunications Committee** | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/1101116784221/S.gif | | |  |  | | --- | | **﻿SEC. PERDUE OFFERS FAREWELL ADDRESS TO FARM BUREAU MEMBERS**  **Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue** thanked farm bureau members for their support of the nation’s agricultural policies over the last four years and encouraged members to continue to advocate for what’s best for American agriculture in his virtual address given during the annual American Farm Bureau Convention meeting on Tuesday evening, per Feedstuffs.﻿ | |
| |  | | --- | | Sec. Perdue, a strong advocate of trade and expanding agricultural market access during his tenure at USDA, says moving forward, “We need more markets abroad to sell the abundance of American agriculture.” He says this includes more trade deals such as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement and holding China to their trading commitments. “These deals would not have happened if it weren’t for the near universal support from the agricultural community.” He added that sights should also be set on southeast Asia, the booming markets of Africa as well as the United Kingdom.  Reflecting on all the happenings of the past year, he said, “We have done what is necessary to ensure the American agriculture economy remains strong, independent and a global leader in production.” | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | https://imgssl.constantcontact.com/letters/images/1101116784221/S.gif | | | |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | [AVMA](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2855940/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=758e1284) | | [One Health, wildlife health wins in year-end funding package](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2855941/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=7b89e4c4) The spending package approved to fund the federal government through the remainder of fiscal year (FY) 2021 provides major wins for veterinarians. These include AVMA priorities such as One Health, funds to renovate the National Wildlife Health Center, and other veterinary-related programs. The AVMA advocacy team worked with lawmakers in both the House and Senate to secure these wins.  [Read more >](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2855942/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=14ef91b4) Extension of the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) The ERTC was extended until June 30, 2021 through the [latest COVID relief legislation](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2855943/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=b5928819) passed by Congress. The legislation increased the credit rate from 50% to 70% of qualified wages and increased the limit per-employee from $10,000 per year to $10,000 for each quarter.  Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) borrowers may also still qualify for ERTC, reversing earlier legislation that precluded this. The almost 60% of veterinary practices that took PPP loans should also explore this new option. [Grants available to support rural veterinary practice](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2856451/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=6f197667) A federal grant program designed to help address rural veterinary shortages is accepting applications for 2021 until mid-April. **Applications are due April 16, 2021**, for the Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP). The program, overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), provides grants to develop, implement, and sustain veterinary services and relieve veterinarian shortage situations across the United States.  [Read more >](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2856452/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=e8fa5440) Biden Administration Extends COVID-19 Student Debt Relief On January 20, 2021, President Biden [directed](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2855944/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=8fee810a) the U.S. Department of Education to continue the suspension on repayment requirements and interest accrual on federal student loans until further notice. The suspension was set to expire on January 31, 2021. [FDA issues alert: food recall expands](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2855945/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=774b6e92)  The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is alerting veterinary professionals and pet owners to potentially fatal levels of aflatoxins in certain Sportmix pet food products, which have been recalled. As of January 11, 2021, more than 70 dogs have died and more than 80 have become sick after consuming the products, according to the FDA. Not all cases have been officially confirmed as aflatoxin poisoning through laboratory testing or record review. [Read more >](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2855946/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=2dd2f79c) State Advocacy Division Update As states gavel back into legislative sessions across the country, AVMA's Division of State Advocacy Team has been diligently monitoring all of the bills and regulations that may be considered and identifying the ones that could have an impact on the veterinary profession. Early trends include legislation pertaining to animal abuse, noneconomic damages, ways to address the opioid epidemic, and restrictions on procedures such as declawing and tail docking.  States continue to consider measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including policy that would prohibit employers from requiring employees to receive the vaccine. The AVMA is working closely with the state veterinary medical associations as they advocate for veterinarians and their teams to receive the vaccine as soon as possible.  [Read the Latest State Legislative Update >](http://www.ne16.com/t/2729896/103094372/2855947/0/1003447/?f5d63f87=QVZNQSUyMEFkdm9jYXRlJTIwLSUyMEphbnVhcnklMjAyMDIx&b44ed14b=YjMwMTBjNjAtM2FjNi00NjAzLThlZjMtNmU0OGQ0ZmFhY2M0&x=093347fb)   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  | | | | |