Report from National Assn of Federal Veterinarians (NAFV)

Workforce Perspectives Relative to the New Administration

US AHA/AAVLD Committee on Diagnostic Laboratory and Veterinary Workforce Development

October 14, 2017
NAFV Issues
A Broad Range

• **High level government engagement**
  – Congress, Senate and House of Representatives
  – Lobbyist
  – FTC
  – Agencies
  – OPM, GAO
  – Affiliated organizations: NARFE, AVMA, AAVMC, etc.
  – Bridge all USG agencies with Federal Veterinarians

• **Individual employee, retiree engagement**
  – Professional insurance
  – Legal counsel
  – Career advice
  – Continuing education
Proposed Legislation affecting Federal Veterinary Retirement

• Increase retirement contribution 1% / year x next 6 years
• Limit government contribution to health plans to only rate of general inflation and not medical cost inflation - Create a voucher program
• Use chained Consumer Price Index to calculate Social Security increases
• Weaken TSP G fund (fm. av. 2.25% to 0.02%)

NAFV opposes all the above
Proposed Legislation affecting Federal Veterinary Retirement

• End FERS annuities altogether, or
• End COLA increases for FERS (COLA would then be only for SS portion of retirement)
• Retirement based on high 5 (instead of high 3)
• End FERS Supplement fm. 2018 forward

NAFV opposes all of the above
Legislative Update
Apparently Little Support for these Big Changes in this Congress

• On July 18, US Democratic Senators wrote to the Majority and Minority leaders of the Senate, asking that in developing Congressional budgets, Federal Retirement not be modified as proposed in the Administration’s budget.

• This is in addition to a letter sent July 10 by House Republicans to a House committee, likewise asking that Federal Retirement not be changed.
Legislative Update

• The Senators’ letter cited two reasons for not changing retirement parameters:

• 1) so as not to renege on promises made to current Federal workers, and

• 2) to position Federal Government to compete in the market place of attracting a new generation of skilled workers

NAFV agrees with the Congresspersons’ positions above
Current NAFV Concerns
General Monitoring Activities

• Reducing the Federal workforce through attrition
• Replacement of Veterinarians with other job series
• Filling staffing ceilings with job series other than veterinarians
• Shifts in professional titles and attitudes of management
• Budget priorities
Potential Issues

• Restructuring of the Federal Government
  – e.g. creation of USDA USec for Trade
  – move of CODEX from FSIS to the above.

  *NAFV has prepared comments in opposition to CODEX move*

• Holeman Rule – Reconstruction Age rule which allows individual members of Congress to target a specific federal employee for firing or salary reduction and/or individual government offices for reduction or elimination
Veterinarians in the Federal Government:
NAFV only source of this critical information

- 20+ Federal Agencies
- >50% USDA
- Not always 701 classification – many different
- Often Agency does not maintain data
- Often Agencies do not share data
- **NAFV will FOIA for the information to maintain data current**
FSIS Current Challenges
Food Safety Threat

- FSIS has, for the first time in its 110 year history, proposed changes that remove veterinarians from their direct role in food safety.
- Instead they are placing lay inspectors into the primary decision making roles with much less direct supervision or oversight from the Supervisory Public Health Veterinarians (SPHV).

While not a new issue of this administration, NAFV will work on this issue with new administration.
Why does NAFV support veterinary inspection in plants?

- Veterinary education prepares the in-plant supervisor have the knowledge and skills to analyze carcasses and make dispositions
- Foreign animal diseases may first be seen in slaughter
- Only veterinarians are prepared to respond to FADs or agro/bioterrorism
To resolve the critical FSIS veterinary shortages, NAFV has proposed a Supervisory Public Health Veterinary (SPHV) Staffing Plan.

- NAFV has provided FSIS with a SPHV staffing plan that incorporates three simple actions to ameliorate recurring issues with hiring and retaining these professionals.
SPHV Staffing Plan Key Components

(Action 1)

All slaughter plants must be under the direct in-plant supervision of a Supervisory Public Health Veterinarians (SPHV); Federal veterinarians, as animal and public health professionals, are uniquely equipped to lead the inspection and food safety processes necessary to protect Americans’ food source.
SPHV Staffing Plan Key Components

(Action 2)

Remuneration and incentives of SPHV’s must be immediately improved to be commensurate with their extensive education and expertise to be competitive with the private sector; and
SPHV Staffing Plan Key Components

(Action 3)

Providing administrative leave and support for annual professional continuing education and training is essential to retaining SPHVs.
SPHV Staffing Plan
Other Key Components

• Specialty Pay (this includes all federal veterinarians)
• Board Certification Pay
• Additional recruitment and retention incentives for difficult-to-fill positions
• Allow private veterinary practitioners to work part time for FSIS
Specialty Pay

• Provide specialty pay to all veterinarians in federal service, regardless of their employment series (comparable to the Title 38 medical personnel pay, currently received by federal physicians, dentists, nurses, etc.)

• Working with Congressional members to include this in the next Farm Bill
SPHV Staffing Plan Support

• NAFV has garnered support for the SPHV staffing plan components from key congressional members, as well as several veterinary associations and commodity groups.

• We are also working to obtain appropriations and adding language to the next Farm Bill to require veterinary oversight in federal and state meat inspection.