

## Successful Barr Amendment Gives \$5 Million Boost to Equine-Assisted Therapy for Veterans



On Friday, June 8, the House of Representatives approved H.R. 5895, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs (VA) Appropriations Act. Per an amendment offered by Rep. Andy Barr (R-KY), the House bill increases funds for Equine Assisted Activities and Therapies (EAAT) by \$5 million. Specifically, the Barr amendment directs appropriators to “transfer \$5 million from the VA’s Health Administration’s (VHA) Medical Community Care Account to the Medical Services Account for the explicit use for the VA’s Adaptive Sports Grant (ASG) program, equine assisted therapy.” On Monday, June 4, AHC sent a letter of support to House Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions (R-TX) urging the committee to rule the Barr amendment “in order” so that it could be adopted on the House floor.

By way of background, Congress has already endorsed robust EAAT measures by approving increased funds for EAAT within the FY2018 omnibus. By approving the Barr Amendment to FY 2019 appropriations, Congress re-enforces an important commitment to our nation’s warriors when they return from combat. According to a clinical study conducted in conjunction with Columbia University, an estimated 14% to 30% of U.S. veterans suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Congress can help mitigate PTSD by boosting EAAT.

The U.S. horse industry employs nearly one million Americans and contributes \$122 billion to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). EAAT programs not only provide valuable services for U.S. veterans, but the operations also support jobs for a growing number of working Americans, and “second careers” for horses who would otherwise retire from racing or other working roles. According to a 2017 economic impact study, EAAT supports more than 6,700 jobs and generates \$311.7 million in annual revenues in the U.S. If you have questions related to AHC’s support for Rep. Barr’s Amendment to H.R. 5895, please contact Bryan Brendle, AHC’s Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at 202-296-4031.