

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1858

To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a loan repayment program to encourage the provision of veterinary services in shortage and emergency situations.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 13 (legislative day, NOVEMBER 12), 2003

Mr. COCHRAN (for himself, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. ALLARD, Mr. ENSIGN, and Mr. CRAPO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a loan repayment program to encourage the provision of veterinary services in shortage and emergency situations.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “National Veterinary
5 Medical Service Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM**
2 **FOR VETERINARY MEDICINE.**

3 The National Agricultural Research, Extension, and
4 Teaching Policy Act of 1977 is amended by inserting after
5 section 1415 (7 U.S.C. 3151) the following:

6 **“SEC. 1415A. VETERINARY MEDICINE LOAN REPAYMENT.**

7 **“(a) DEFINITIONS.**

8 **“In this section:**

9 **“(A) QUALIFYING EDUCATIONAL LOAN.—**

10 The term ‘qualifying educational loan’ means a
11 government or commercial loan incurred by an
12 individual to pay for attendance at an accred-
13 ited college of veterinary medicine resulting in
14 a degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine or
15 the equivalent, including—

16 **“(i) tuition expenses;**

17 **“(ii) other reasonable educational ex-**
18 **penses, including fees, books, and labora-**
19 **tory expenses; and**

20 **“(iii) reasonable living expenses, as**
21 **determined by the Secretary.**

22 **“(B) VETERINARIAN SHORTAGE SITUA-**
23 **TION.—**

24 **“(i) IN GENERAL.—**The term ‘veteri-
25 narian shortage situation’ shall have the
26 meaning that the Secretary shall prescribe.

1 “(ii) CONSIDERATIONS.—In deter-
 2 mining what constitutes a veterinarian
 3 shortage situation, the Secretary may con-
 4 sider—

5 “(I) urban or rural areas that
 6 the Secretary determines have a
 7 shortage of veterinarians;

8 “(II) areas of veterinary practice
 9 that the Secretary determines have a
 10 shortage of veterinarians, such as
 11 public health, epidemiology, and food
 12 safety;

13 “(III) areas of veterinary need in
 14 the Federal Government; and

15 “(IV) other factors that the Sec-
 16 retary considers to be relevant.

17 “(b) PROGRAM.—

18 “(1) SERVICE IN VETERINARIAN SHORTAGE
 19 SITUATIONS.—

20 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the avail-
 21 ability of funds under subsection (d), the Sec-
 22 retary shall carry out a program to enter into
 23 agreements with veterinarians under which a
 24 veterinarian agrees to provide, for a period of
 25 time determined by the Secretary and specified

1 in the agreement, veterinary services in veteri-
2 narian shortage situations.

3 “(B) ANNUAL LOAN REPAYMENT.—For
4 each year of service under an agreement under
5 this paragraph, the Secretary shall pay an
6 amount, determined by the Secretary and speci-
7 fied in the agreement, of the principal, interest,
8 and related expenses of the qualifying edu-
9 cational loans of the veterinarian.

10 “(2) SERVICE TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN
11 EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.—The Secretary may enter
12 into a 1-year agreement with a veterinarian who has
13 entered into an agreement under paragraph (1) for
14 the veterinarian to provide service to the Federal
15 Government in an emergency situation, as deter-
16 mined by the Secretary, under terms and conditions
17 specified in the agreement.

18 “(C) ADDITIONAL ANNUAL LOAN REPAY-
19 MENT.—

20 “(i) IN GENERAL.—Under an agree-
21 ment under this paragraph, the Secretary
22 shall pay an amount, as determined by the
23 Secretary and specified in the agreement,
24 of the principal, interest, and related ex-

1 penses of the qualifying educational loans
2 of the veterinarian.

3 “(ii) AMOUNT IN ADDITION.—An
4 amount paid under clause (i) shall be in
5 addition to the amount paid under the
6 agreement under paragraph (1).

7 “(D) REQUIREMENTS.—An agreement
8 under this paragraph shall provide that—

9 “(i) a veterinarian shall not be re-
10 quired to serve more than 60 working days
11 per year of the agreement; and

12 “(ii) a veterinarian who provides serv-
13 ice in accordance with the agreement—

14 “(I) shall receive a salary com-
15 mensurate with the duties performed;
16 and

17 “(II) shall be reimbursed for
18 travel and per diem expenses as ap-
19 propriate for the duration of the serv-
20 ice.

21 “(c) ADMINISTRATION.—

22 “(1) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may carry
23 out the program under subsection (b) directly or
24 through an agreement with another Federal agency
25 or service provider.

1 “(2) BREACH REMEDIES.—

2 “(A) IN GENERAL.—An agreement under
3 paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (b) shall pro-
4 vide remedies for a breach of the agreement by
5 the veterinarian, including repayment or partial
6 repayment of financial assistance received, with
7 interest.

8 “(B) AMOUNTS RECOVERED.—Funds re-
9 covered under this subsection—

10 “(i) shall be credited to the account
11 available to carry out this section; and

12 “(ii) shall be available to carry out
13 this section without further appropriation
14 until expended.

15 “(C) WAIVER.—If the Secretary deter-
16 mines that a veterinarian has breached an
17 agreement due to extreme hardship or extreme
18 need, the Secretary may grant a waiver of the
19 repayment obligation for breach of contract.

20 “(4) REPAYMENT SCHEDULE.—The Secretary
21 may enter into an agreement with the holder of a
22 qualifying educational loan for which payments are
23 made under this section to establish a schedule for
24 the making of payments.

1 “(5) TAX LIABILITY.—In addition to edu-
2 cational loan repayments, the Secretary shall make
3 such additional payments to a participating veteri-
4 narian as the Secretary determines to be appropriate
5 to reimburse the veterinarian for tax liability result-
6 ing from participation in the program under this
7 section.

8 “(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
9 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are nec-
10 essary to carry out this section, to remain available until
11 expended.”.

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