

AGRICULTURE ACTS

PUBLIC LAW 108–161—DEC. 6, 2003

Public Law 108–161
108th Congress

An Act

Dec. 6, 2003
[H.R. 1367]

To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a loan repayment program regarding the provision of veterinary services in shortage situations, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

National
Veterinary
Medical Service
Act.
7 USC 3101 note.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

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

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM REGARDING VETERINARY MEDICINE.

The National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3101 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 1415 the following new section:

7 USC 3151a.

“SEC. 1415A. VETERINARY MEDICINE LOAN REPAYMENT.

“(a) PROGRAM.—

Contracts.

“(1) SERVICE IN SHORTAGE SITUATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out a program of entering into agreements with veterinarians under which the veterinarians agree to provide, for a period of time as determined by the Secretary and specified in the agreement, veterinary services in veterinarian shortage situations. For each year of such service under an agreement under this paragraph, the Secretary shall pay an amount, as determined by the Secretary and specified in the agreement, of the principal and interest of qualifying educational loans of the veterinarians.

“(2) SERVICE TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into agreements of 1 year duration with veterinarians who have agreements pursuant to paragraph (1) for such veterinarians to provide services to the Federal Government in emergency situations, as determined by the Secretary, under terms and conditions specified in the agreement. Pursuant to an agreement under this paragraph, the Secretary shall pay an amount, in addition to the amount paid pursuant to the agreement in paragraph (1), as determined by the Secretary and specified in the agreement, of the principal and interest of qualifying educational loans of the veterinarians.

“(B) REQUIREMENTS.—Agreements entered into under this paragraph shall include the following:

“(i) A veterinarian shall not be required to serve more than 60 working days per year of the agreement.

“(ii) A veterinarian who provides service pursuant to the agreement shall receive a salary commensurate with the duties and shall be reimbursed for travel and per diem expenses as appropriate for the duration of the service.

“(b) DETERMINATION OF VETERINARIAN SHORTAGE SITUATIONS.—In determining ‘veterinarian shortage situations’ the Secretary may consider the following:

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“(1) Urban or rural areas that the Secretary determines have a shortage of veterinarians.

“(2) Areas of veterinary practice that the Secretary determines have a shortage of veterinarians, such as public health, epidemiology, and food safety.

“(3) Areas of veterinary need in the Federal Government.

“(4) Other factors that the Secretary considers to be relevant.

“(c) ADMINISTRATION.—

“(1) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary may carry out this program directly or enter into agreements with another Federal agency or other service provider to assist in the administration of this program.

“(2) BREACH REMEDIES.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Agreements with program participants shall provide remedies for any breach of an agreement by a participant, including repayment or partial repayment of financial assistance received, with interest.

“(B) AMOUNTS RECOVERED.—Funds recovered under this subsection shall be credited to the account available to carry out this section and shall remain available until expended.

“(3) WAIVER.—The Secretary may grant a waiver of the repayment obligation for breach of contract in the event of extreme hardship or extreme need, as determined by the Secretary.

“(4) AMOUNT.—The Secretary shall develop regulations to determine the amount of loan repayment for a year of service by a veterinarian. In making the determination, the Secretary shall consider the extent to which such determination—

Regulations.

“(A) affects the ability of the Secretary to maximize the number of agreements that can be provided under the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program from the amounts appropriated for such agreements; and

“(B) provides an incentive to serve in veterinary service shortage areas with the greatest need.

“(5) QUALIFYING EDUCATIONAL LOANS.—Loan repayments provided under this section may consist of payments on behalf of participating individuals of the principal and interest on government and commercial loans received by the individual for attendance of the individual at an accredited college of veterinary medicine resulting in a degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine or the equivalent, which loans were made for—

“(A) tuition expenses;

“(B) all other reasonable educational expenses, including fees, books, and laboratory expenses, incurred by the individual; or

“(C) reasonable living expenses as determined by the Secretary.

“(6) REPAYMENT SCHEDULE.—The Secretary may enter into an agreement with the holder of any loan for which payments are made under this section to establish a schedule for the making of such payments.

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“(7) TAX LIABILITY.—In addition to educational loan repayments, the Secretary shall make such additional payments to participants as the Secretary determines to be appropriate for the purpose of providing reimbursements to participants for individual tax liability resulting from participation in this program.

“(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated for carrying out this section such sums as may be necessary and such sums shall remain available to the Secretary for the purposes of this section until expended.”.

Approved December 6, 2003.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 1367:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 149 (2003):

Nov. 17, considered and passed House.

Nov. 24, considered and passed Senate.