

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2009 RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 16 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY AND
VETERINARY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT MATTER: VETERINARY SERVICES INVESTMENT ACT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Veterinary Services Investment Act (VSIA) was introduced in the House of Representatives on July 31, 2009 and is expected to be introduced in the Senate at the end of September 2009. The VSIA will help ensure a stable and safe food supply for citizens in the US.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) reports that 60 percent of the veterinary school graduates in 2009 entered private practice of which only five percent opted to practice large-animal medicine. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has predicted a veterinarian shortage in the coming years. This shortage already exists in parts of rural America and shows signs of worsening unless current trends are reversed.

This legislation will establish a new competitive grant program to relieve veterinary shortage situations and support veterinary services. It will help address the challenges faced by America's farmers and rural communities which rely heavily on large animal veterinarians. Grants awarded under the program may be used for a variety of purposes including:

- Promoting recruitment, placement, and retention of veterinarians, veterinary technicians, students of veterinary medicine and students of veterinary technology.
- Assisting veterinarians with establishing or expanding practices for the purpose of equipping veterinary offices, sharing in the overhead costs of such practices, or to the establishment of mobile veterinary facilities where at least a portion of such facilities will address education or extension needs.
- Providing financial assistance for veterinary students, veterinary interns and externs, fellows and residents, and veterinary technician students to attend training programs in food safety or food animal medicine to cover expenses other than tuition.
- Establishing or expanding accredited veterinary education programs, veterinary residency and fellowship programs or veterinary internship programs or veterinary internship and externship programs in coordination with accredited colleges of veterinary medicine.

- Programs for tele-veterinary medicine where such practices shall at least in part contribute to veterinary extension, education, or research.
- Assisting the office or position of a state veterinarian or animal health official to coordinate veterinary services and food protection issues.
- Assessments of veterinarian shortage situations and preparation of applications for designation as a shortage situation.
- Continuing education and extension, including distance-based education, for veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and other health professionals needed to strengthen veterinary programs and enhance food safety.
- Recruiting and retaining faculty at accredited colleges of veterinary medicine.
- Programs, in coordination with universities or local educational agencies, to encourage students in secondary schools to pursue a career in veterinary medical or science professions.

VSIA will be administered by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), an agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Secretary of Agriculture shall award a preference to applications that document coordination between or with the state, national allied or regional veterinary organizations, or specialty boards recognized by AVMA; the applicable accredited veterinary education institution, accredited department of veterinary science, or department of comparative medicine; or the applicable state veterinarian or animal health official (or its equivalent); and will use the grant funds to help meet veterinary workforce or food protection needs.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the United States Congress pass the Veterinary Services Investment Act (VSIA). This action will help to meet this nation's demand for large-animal veterinarians and rural America's need for services provided by veterinarians.