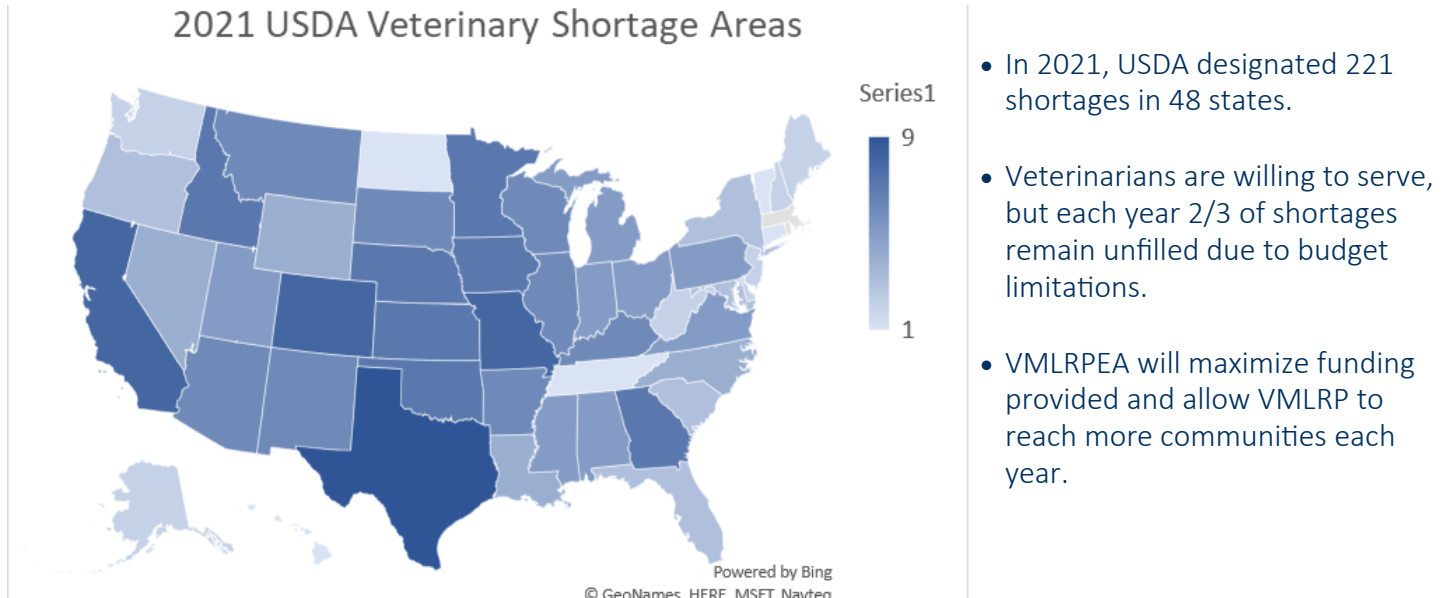


Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act (H.R. 2447/Senate bill forthcoming)



AVMA SUPPORTS

USDA has designated 221 veterinary shortage areas in 48 states. Support is needed to increase access to veterinary medicine in rural and underserved communities.



Why VMLRP?

Unfortunately, most veterinarians graduate with significant educational debt, making it difficult to attract them to rural communities and careers in food animal or public health veterinary medicine, as they typically pay less than companion animal practice.

To help relieve their student debt burden and to recruit and retain veterinarians to high-need areas, VMLRP provides up to \$75,000 toward educational debt in exchange for three years of service in any of the USDA-designated veterinary shortage areas. At the same time, VMLRP helps states address their unique needs, whether food animal medicine, public health, or food safety.

However, a 37% withholding tax on VMLRP awards limits the program's ability to close veterinary access gaps in communities they are needed most.

USDA funding covers the cost of VMLRP service awards as well as a 37% federal withholding tax. That means 37% of the limited federal funding provided by Congress each year ends up going back to the Treasury, when that funding could be used to reach more underserved communities.

Consistently, VMLRP receives more applications than funding allows to make awards and the demand for the program continues to increase.

Importantly, there is precedent for exempting service awards from withholding taxes. In 2004, Congress exempted service awards through the National Health Service Corps program from the withholding taxes (P.L. 108-357).

Passage of the VMLRP Enhancement Act will help more rural communities gain access to the veterinarians they need to ensure animal health and welfare, food safety, prevent disease and maintain public health.

Farmers and ranchers in rural areas depend on VMLRP to access veterinary services and ensure the health of their animals.

- By providing routine and emergency services, veterinarians maintain and improve herd health, nutrition, and reproductive management—services critical to a farmers' bottom line.

Good animal health and welfare is necessary to preserve U.S. animal agriculture export markets.

- Veterinarians are needed to maintain a safe and wholesome food supply for the U.S. and our international trading partners.

VMLRP participants are federally accredited and state certified to meet traceability rules and state regulations for interstate movement of livestock.

- Participants work closely with livestock producers and State and Federal officials and serve as the first line of defense against spread of endemic and zoonotic diseases, introduction of high consequence foreign animal diseases, and other threats to the health and wellbeing of both animals and humans who consume animal products.

Veterinarians play an important role in protecting food safety as well as public health and animal welfare by ensuring the animals that enter our food supply are healthy and receive the appropriate medical care and treatment.

- For example, through the FDA Veterinary Feed Directive, the use of medically important antibiotics used in animal feed requires the oversight and order of a veterinarian. This ensures the responsible stewardship and judicious use of antimicrobials as well as the health of food-producing animals.

On April 12, 2021, Reps. Ron Kind (D-WI), Adrian Smith (R-NE), Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and Dusty Johnson (R-SD) introduced the bill which was referred to the Ways & Means Committee.

House offices are urged to cosponsor this bill by contacting Ben Hutterer (Kind) at 202.225.5506 or Josh Jackson (Smith) at 202.225.6435

Last Congress, Senators Mike Crapo (R-ID) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) introduced the bill which was referred to the Finance Committee.

We expect the Senate companion bill to be reintroduced in the coming weeks.

*116th cosponsors : Senators Tammy **Baldwin** (D-WI); Susan **Collins** (R-ME); Kevin **Cramer** (R-ND); Tammy **Duckworth** (D-IL); Dianne **Feinstein** (D-CA); Kristen **Gillibrand** (D-NY); Maggie **Hassan** (D-NH); Angus **King** (I-ME); Amy **Klobuchar** (D-MN); Pat **Leahy** (D-VT); Robert **Menendez** (D-NJ); Lisa **Murkowski** (R-AK); James **Risch** (R-ID); Jacky **Rosen** (D-NV); Tina **Smith** (D-MN) and John **Boozman** (R-AR).*

VMLRP Funding History		
FY 21	\$8,500,000	116-260
FY 20	\$8,000,000	116-94
FY 19	\$8,000,000	116-6
FY18	\$8,000,000	115-141
FY17	\$6,500,000	115-31
FY16	\$5,000,000	114-113
FY15	\$5,000,000	113-235
FY14	\$4,790,000	113-79
FY13	\$4,436,146	113-2
FY12	\$4,790,000	112-55
FY11	\$4,790,000	112-10