

U.S. Rep. Kind: Introduces bill to address veterinarian shortage in rural Wisconsin

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La Crosse, WI – Yesterday, **Rep. Ron Kind** introduced the bipartisan *Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act*. This legislation will help address Wisconsin's veterinarian shortage by lifting overly burdensome taxes on programs that encourage veterinarians to practice in rural communities. The bill was co-sponsored by Reps. Adrian Smith (R-NE), Kurt Schrader (D-OR), and Dusty Johnson (R-SD).

“Veterinarians are a critical part of Wisconsin's agricultural and rural economy, yet many communities are facing a shortage of animal care professionals,” said **Rep. Ron Kind**. “This bill will help increase opportunities for veterinarians to practice in communities in need across Wisconsin, ensuring a healthy and safe food supply chain.”

“The Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association (WVMA) applauds Congressman Ron Kind for recognizing the importance of reintroducing the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) Enhancement Act. Passage of this bill would help address the veterinary shortage areas in Wisconsin and the growing amount of student debt veterinarians face after graduating,” said **Jo-ell Carson, Executive Director, Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association**.

“With the renewed focus on our nation's food supply, a light has been shed on the shortage of large animal veterinarians,” said **Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation President Kevin Krentz**. “A farmer's relationship with his or her veterinarian is essential to keeping livestock healthy and safe. Wisconsin Farm Bureau appreciates the efforts of Rep. Kind in addressing this challenge through the

introduction of the VMLRP Enhancement Act as we expect this to have a positive impact on addressing the veterinarian shortage in underserved areas.”

“Rural veterinarians are essential for maintaining animal health on dairy and livestock farms, and their businesses are a vital part of our rural communities. This bill will help address the veterinarian shortage in Western Wisconsin and support the farmers who depend on their care,” said **Darin Von Ruden, Wisconsin Farmers Union President.**

The United States Department of Agriculture has designated six underserved zones in Wisconsin, including one zone in Wisconsin’s Third Congressional District encompassing Eau Claire, Jackson, and Trempealeau counties. In this zone, there are approximately 136,000 cows and only 12 food animal or mixed animal veterinarians.

The Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) is subject to a burdensome 37 percent federal withholding tax, which limits the number of awards for qualifying veterinarians. The *Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act* will provide an exemption from the federal income withholding tax for veterinarians, bringing more veterinarians to rural communities across the country.