

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1331

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to veterinary technicians.

Brief Description: Changing veterinary technician credentialing to licensure.

Sponsors: By Representatives Haigh, Kretz, Wallace, Walsh, Cody, Strow, Hinkle, Pettigrew, Priest and Dunn.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/14/07, 2/22/07 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/07, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/4/07, 48-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes registration of veterinary technicians to licensing.
- Adds a member representing licensed veterinary technicians to the state Board of Veterinary Medicine.
- Authorizes the Board of Veterinary Medicine to adopt rules including standards for experience, performance and continuing education.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hailey, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Newhouse, Orcutt, Strow and VanDeWege.

Staff: Meg Van Schoorl (786-7105).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

A veterinary technician is a person who has: (1) successfully completed an examination administered by the state Veterinary Board of Governors (Board), and (2) either completed a post high school course approved by the Board in the care and treatment of animals, or had five years of practical experience acceptable to the Board with a licensed veterinarian. Veterinary technicians are registered under the Veterinary Medicine statutes. The Board has six members, five of whom are licensed veterinarians and one is a lay member. All are appointed by the Governor.

House Bill 1511, introduced during the 2005 legislative session, would have made several changes in the training and credentialing of veterinary technicians, including removing the option of obtaining registration based on five years of experience. The Legislature requested that the Department of Health conduct a "Sunrise Review" on House Bill 1511 in accordance with chapter 18.120 RCW, which states that a health care profession should be regulated only under certain circumstances. If greater regulation is necessary, the Legislature may consider five categories, and should select the one among the following that is least restrictive and most consistent with the public interest: stricter civil actions and criminal prosecutions, inspection requirements, registration, certification, and licensure. After undertaking the Sunrise Review on House Bill 1511, the Department of Health issued a report in January 2006 providing its recommendations.

Summary of Bill:

The state Veterinary Board of Governors (Board) must issue a veterinary technician license to a person who has passed a Board-administered examination and has either: (1) completed a post-high school, Board-approved course in animal care and treatment; or (2) had five years of practical experience, acceptable to the Board, with a licensed veterinarian.

The Board is given rule-making authority to identify experiential requirements for prospective technicians who are following the five year option as well as the requirements for the supervising veterinarian's attestation of completion of training and practical experience. The Board is authorized to adopt rules including, standards for performance and minimum continuing education standards.

The Board is increased from six to seven members, one of whom shall be a licensed, employed veterinary technician who is a state resident and U.S. citizen. This member will also be appointed by the Governor but will not vote in Board decisions involving discipline of a veterinarian involving standard of care.

Several existing statutory references to "registration" are amended to refer to "licensing."

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The veterinary technician appointed by the Governor to the Veterinary Board of Governors must be trained in both small and large animal medicine.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The supply of veterinarians and veterinary technicians has never kept up with the demand, especially in rural areas. Under the supervision of veterinarians, veterinary technicians anaesthetize and monitor animals during surgery, and make sure the animal is well cared-for. This bill is the result of the Department of Health Sunrise Review process. The Sunrise Review confirmed that the experience route should remain, but that there should be more concrete parameters for its attainment. Registration is simply a roster of practitioners while licensing means that a veterinary technician has met predetermined qualifications. Licensing is much more akin to the activities and scope of the veterinary technician practice, and will help assure the quality of their services. Only three states, including Washington, allow experience as an option for credentialing veterinary technicians. Experience and education can both have a good impact on veterinary technician skills. We should also look at increasing the opportunities for veterinary technicians to get education and training. It is important to have a veterinary technician representative on the Veterinary Board of Governors. It may not be appropriate for them to vote in a disciplinary case regarding a veterinarian's standard of care.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Haigh, prime sponsor; Markiva Contris, Washington State Association of Veterinary Technicians; and Greg Hanon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.