

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6187

As Amended by House, March 6, 2008

Title: An act relating to conditional scholarships for food animal veterinarians.

Brief Description: Creating the food animal veterinarian conditional scholarship program.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Rasmussen, Schoesler, Morton, Murray and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/23/08, 1/28/08 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/15/08, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Shin, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Delvin, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Schoesler and Sheldon.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: Two hundred and eight food animal veterinarians currently practice in Washington serving approximately 1,203,750 total food animals. This equates to 5,787 food animals per food animal veterinarian. A shortage of food animal veterinarians has been recognized nationwide by the federal government and a number of states. Since April 2007, eight states have established special financial aid programs encouraging students to practice food animal medicine and four other states have pending legislation.

The Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences is the largest department in Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. The department is organized into four divisions-small animal; equine; food animal; and clinical support services. Three hundred eighty eight students are in the College of Veterinary Medicine during the 2007-08 academic year with 93 students in the graduating class. The average veterinary student graduates with a debt of over \$90,000.

Summary of Bill: The food animal veterinarian conditional scholarship program is created. The program is administered by Washington State University (WSU). Students may receive the scholarship if they are registered for at least six credit hours, are making satisfactory academic progress, have declared a major in veterinary medicine, and declare an intention to practice veterinary medicine in Washington emphasizing food animal medicine. The scholarship may not exceed the amount of resident tuition and fees at the WSU College of

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Veterinary Medicine, and the cost of room, board, laboratory fees and supplies, and books for up to five years.

WSU establishes a selection committee to screen and select recipients. The selection criteria must emphasize factors demonstrating a sustained interest in food animals and serving the needs of Washington's agricultural communities. Criteria must also take into account the need for food animal veterinarians in diverse areas of the state.

A recipient must repay the amount of the conditional scholarship, with interest, if he or she fails to be employed as a food animal veterinarian in Washington a year for each year of scholarship received. The person must devote at least 50 percent to large production animal veterinary practice to be considered a food animal veterinarian. WSU is responsible for collecting repayments.

The act is null and void if not funded in the state budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Washington is an agricultural state and we need to provide adequate veterinary care for our food supply. The Washington State Veterinary Medical Association strongly supports this effort. Going into food animal practice is a financial sacrifice for veterinarians who could make more money treating small animals and pets. Food animal veterinarians work in hard conditions and often have to travel and work at odd hours. This will help the state retain some of our best and most dedicated veterinarians. Helping insure food animal health will help boost our international food animal exports. The demand for food animal veterinarians is increasing.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Jack Field, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Terry McElwain, Director, Animal Health Resource Center, WSU; Greg Hanon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Association; Ed Field, Washington Cattle Feeders.