Cong. John E. Fogary
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Interstate & Foreign
Commerce Committee
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I am pleased to have this opportunity to appear before you today to speak for the legislation proposed in my bill-HR-11205--which you are now considering.

In my 25 years in the Congress, I have worked long and hard for legislation in all of the health areas. One of those areas, which has always appeared of paramount importance to me, is that of health manpower.

Since 1956, when I foresaw our future urgent need for more health personnel to bring a growing body of research accomplishments to a burgeoning population which would demand better standards of health services, I have urged more private and government efforts to expand our health manpower base.

It has been a great satisfaction to help enact measures to provide Federal support for programs which strive to close the gap between the numbers of health personnel we have and the numbers needed for the future.

In that respect, we have succeeded in providing support for training physicians, osteopaths, dentists, nurses, ophthalmologists, optometrists, and pharmacists through school-construction and improvement grants, student loan programs and scholarship funds. We have not done enough there, perhaps, but we have made a beginning.

But there is one professional medical group--as vitally important to our health team as any of the others and equally plagued by manpower shortages--which we have, until now, largely overlooked. I speak of the veterinary profession and our veterinary students.

HR-11205 seeks to remedy our regrettable oversight by providing Federal assistance for the construction of teaching facilities for veterinary medical personnel and establishing funds for loans to students of veterinary medicine.

When I introduced this bill in the House last September, I said: "With the public health team, the stakes are too high to warrant anything but full support of all its members. It is time for us to acknowledge the vital role of today's veterinarian and to act swiftly to meet his needs."

Even at that time, it had been more than two years since the pressing manpower needs of the veterinary profession were detailed to the Congress during hearings on the "Health Professions Educational Assistance Act of 1963." Because they were reluctant to possibly further delay that Act's passage by adding to its already-lengthy provisions, and because they felt that their needs might be served better by a separate piece of legislation, the veterinarians decided, through their American Veterinary Medical Association, not to ask to be included at that time.

In the press of legislative business in two succeeding Congressional sessions, their problems were again bypassed.

So, today, nearly three years since it first came to our attention, and more than half a year after I introduced HR-11205 and asked for swift action, the veterinary manpower problem grows more acute--and we have yet to do anything about it.

Why has the Congress neglected so long to turn its attention in this direction?

Perhaps it is because many of our colleagues in Congress--lacking thorough knowledge of the veterinarians' wide-ranging activities and their importance to the public health team--tend to regard them only as animal doctors. Such a parochial viewpoint disregards the fact that man is also an animal whose health problems are closely entwined with those of all other animals. I think that it is time that we improved that perspective.

It is true that about 14,000 veterinarians hold to the traditional function of caring for domestic and zoo animals and for our household pets. But, commonplace as these services might seem, they have direct bearing on human health, when we consider them in the proper sense.

For example: inoculations of farm animals--swine, cattle, sheep, chickens--by a veterinarian do not appear to have public-health significance--until you think that such life-saving, disease-controlling efforts make possible an ever-larger and better-quality supply of food for our populace.

Or--consider the veterinarian's role in caring for pets. What has that to do with public health? It has a great deal to do with the health and welfare of humans when you think of the importance of pets to the emotional stability of children or lonely persons, to the security of blind people, or to the protection of households. Thought of that way, the routine work of practicing veterinarians appears in a different light.

The public health is further served by 1,400 veterinarians who make up the faculties and staffs of the country's 18 schools of veterinary medicine which turn out as many high-quality graduates as their limited capacities will allow.

But, today's veterinarians engage also in a great number of other public-health activities--31 specialties in all-most of which were unknown to the profession 20 years ago. Some 6,600, or about 30 percent of our veterinarians are in these fields.

They work as meat inspectors, assuring that the prepared raw meat products that we buy for our tables are wholesome and safe for consumption.

They are concerned with the health inpection of imported animals; with developing and testing of drugs and biologics for both human and animal use; with the care of experimental animals used in medical research; with animal studies of air pollution, radiation, space travel, and bacteriological warfare effects; and with bio-engineering.

Most people do not know that many medical advances have been based on veterinary discoveries. The observation that insects can transmit disease between animals and between animals and men led to the successful conquest of yellow fever and malaria. The development of the drug used against human hookworm; the development of a potent anticoagulant drug which has helped save many coronary victims; the perfection of a method of anethesia are only a few advances made possible because of basic veterinary medical accomplishments.

Similar efforts to control animal and human diseases continue. Today, veterinarians are working at some 25 major research centers and smaller laboratories with other specialists. Many grants from the Public Health Service and other Federal agencies support veterinary research in cancer, heart disease, gastric ulcers, and other chronic diseases striving to improve our understanding of human pathology.

In the era of modern medicine, veterinary science has come of age in realizing and developing its great and varied potential. Certainly, as specialists in animal health--inseparably and fundamentally linked with human health--the veterinarians are essential to the life of any modern country.

Yet, in spite of the profession's accomplishments in veterinary education, animal care, and the other invaluable specialties, veterinarians have barely begun the work that they must do.

Animal disease still causes a staggering annual loss of $2.7 billion in this -- and I quote the Secretary of Agriculture -- "safest country in the world for raising livestock and poultry." It is estimated that disease claims one of every five of our farm animals before it can reach the food market.

We are still learning of human health problems caused by nutrition deficiencies and harmful foreign substances in our food animals.

We know that there are many yet-undiscovered causes of animal and animal-man shared diseases which we must find and destroy or control.

If we could wipe out animal disease completely, we could feed an additional 100 million people in the United States without adding a single head to the current livestock population.

Serious as the animal health problems are in the United States, they diminish when compared with the plight of some other countries of the world. Millions of people in less-advanced nations are always hungry, and millions actually starve to death because animal diseases cause production losses of meat, milk and eggs, or make millions of acres of otherwise excellent land unusable.

In such countries, human survival rates are tragically low because food lacks adequate nutrition or is infected with harmful diseases. General health is poor and life expectancies are sharply limited, compared with those of people in more advanced countries. Animal-borne diseases like cholera, bubonic plague, typhus, malaria, rinderpest, and hoof and mouth disease -- which have devastated mass populations in epidemics in the past -- lurk nearby as constant threats to the people's lives.

Wiping out animal diseases alone could improve the health, economy, and political stability of the whole world.

But -- apart from such humanitarian considerations and desirable long-range goals -- we are concerned here today with our urgent requirements in the United States. Now, when we have veterinarians in so many research and preventive medicine areas, we have only 22,000 of them. Moreover, the continued growth of population, incomes, livestock products and small-animal numbers make the outlook for the profession one of rapid change and increasing complexity. It is estimated that we will have to more than double our veterinarian population by 1980.

That means that we must train nearly 1,500 new veterinarians each year for the next 15 years. The American Veterinary Medical Association estimates that, with present and planned school facilities, our maximum output of veterinarians between 1975 and 1980 will be only 242 each year. That is less than one seventh of our estimated requirements. And, it doesn't even take into account the attrition the profession will experience as the result of disability, aging and death of its members.

Clearly, the present rate of graduation from schools of veterinary medicine must be substantially increased.

The American Veterinary Medical Association has stated its needs in the starkest terms: "Stronger and more effective efforts than in the past will be needed to enlarge and expand veterinary education facilities in order to increase the number of veterinary medical graduates and to encourage veterinarians to avail themselves of continuing education so as to increase their efficiency and achieve a higher output of services per veterinarian."

HR-11205, which I speak for today, is designed to help meet this need.

In its first part, it would authorize appropriation of $2 million for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1966, and for each of the two succeeding fiscal years, for grants to assist in replacing or rehabilitating existing teaching facilities for the training of veterinary medical personnel; and $15 million for the fiscal year beginning July 1966, and for each of the two succeeding fiscal years, for grants to assist in constructing new or expanded teaching facilities for training veterinary medical personnel.

In a project for a new school, or new facilities in an existing school, where such facilities are of particular importance in providing a major expansion of training capacity, the amount granted may not exceed 66 and two-thirds percent of the construction cost. In any other grant, such amount may not exceed 50 percent of the necessary construction cost.

An additional sum of not more than $25,000 may be granted for the cost of preparing initial plans.

Applicants for these grants must be accredited, or other nonprofit, schools of veterinary medicine or, if a new school, there must be reasonable assurance that the school will meet accreditation standards.

The bill also outlines certain other restrictions and considerations in the awarding of grants under this part.

The second part of the bill would authorize the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, to enter into agreements with accredited public or other nonprofit schools of veterinary medicine for establishing and operating student loan funds.

Each school receiving Federal funds for this purpose will be required to allocate an additional amount from other sources equal to not more than one ninth of the amount deposited by the Federal Government.

Loans, not to exceed $2,000 per student for any academic year, may be made only to students needing such funds to pursue full-time study courses at the school, leading to degrees of doctor of veterinary medicine.

According to the provisions of the bill a loan shall be repayable in equal or graduated installments over the ten-year period which begins 3 years after a student ceases to pursue a full-time course at a school of veterinary medicine.

To establish these loan funds, the bill further provides that the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, be authorized $510,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1966; $1,020,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1967; $1,540,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1968. In addition, such sums are provided for each of the three ensuing fiscal years as may be necessary to enable students who have received loans for any academic year ending before July 1, 1968, to continue their educations.

In your deliberations on this legislation you cannot help but conclude, as I have, that veterinarians--as doctors of animals, as educators of veterinary medicine, as meat inspectors, nutritionists, research scientists, as specialists in any of the many activities they pursue--are vitally important to the public health team.

You will become convinced, I am sure, that the increased demands being made for veterinary services in all of our efforts for improving our country's health standards make drastic, immediate increases in their numbers imperative.

I know that you will agree with me that in view of the apparent inability of existing or planned training facilities to provide the number of veterinarians we need, we must provide this profession with the same opportunities which we have already provided for the other professions in the health fraternity.

Finally, I believe that you will agree that it is time to act swiftly to prevent this long-neglected manpower shortage from becoming any worse, and to act now to improve the veterinary manpower base for the future.

I urge you to report HR-11205 out favorably so that it may be considered by the House as a whole.