

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8473

To provide public health veterinary services to Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations for rabies prevention, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 23, 2026

Mr. BEGICH introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, and Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To provide public health veterinary services to Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations for rabies prevention, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veterinary Services
5 to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

7 It is the sense of Congress that the Indian Health
8 Service of the Department of Health and Human Services

1 is uniquely suited to empower Indian Tribes and Tribal
2 organizations to address zoonotic disease threats in the
3 communities they serve by providing public health veteri-
4 nary services through a One Health approach that recog-
5 nizes the interconnection between people, animals, plants,
6 and their shared environment.

7 **SEC. 3. PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERVICES.**

8 Title II of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act
9 is amended by inserting after section 223 (25 U.S.C.
10 1621v) the following:

11 **“SEC. 224. PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERVICES.**

12 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

13 “(1) PUBLIC HEALTH VETERINARY SERV-
14 ICES.—The term ‘public health veterinary services’
15 includes any of the following:

16 “(A) Spaying and neutering services for
17 domestic animals.

18 “(B) Diagnoses.

19 “(C) Surveillance.

20 “(D) Epidemiology.

21 “(E) Control.

22 “(F) Prevention.

23 “(G) Elimination.

24 “(H) Vaccination.

1 “(I) Any other related service or activity
2 that reduces the risk of zoonotic disease trans-
3 mission or antimicrobial resistance in humans,
4 food, or animals.

5 “(2) ZOOONOTIC DISEASE.—The term ‘zoonotic
6 disease’ means a disease or infection that may be
7 transmitted naturally from vertebrate animals to hu-
8 mans, or from humans to vertebrate animals.

9 “(b) AUTHORIZATION FOR VETERINARY SERVICES.—
10 The Secretary, acting through the Service, may expend
11 funds, directly or pursuant to the Indian Self-Determina-
12 tion and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5301 et
13 seq.), for public health veterinary services to prevent and
14 control zoonotic disease infection and transmission in
15 Service areas where the risk for disease occurrence in hu-
16 mans and wildlife is endemic.

17 “(c) PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS; COORDINATION.—
18 In providing public health veterinary services under sub-
19 section (b), the Secretary may—

20 “(1) assign or deploy veterinary public health
21 officers from the Commissioned Corps of the Public
22 Health Service to Service areas; and

23 “(2) coordinate and implement activities with—
24 “(A) the Director of the Centers for Dis-
25 ease Control and Prevention; and

1 “(B) the Secretary of Agriculture.

2 “(d) REPORT.—The Secretary shall submit to the
3 Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate, the Committee
4 on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate,
5 the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Rep-
6 resentatives, and the Committee on Energy and Commerce
7 of the House of Representatives a biennial report on the
8 use of funds, the assignment and deployment of veterinary
9 public health officers from the Commissioned Corps of the
10 Public Health Service, data related to the monitoring and
11 disease surveillance of zoonotic diseases, and related serv-
12 ices provided under this section.”.

13 **SEC. 4. APHIS WILDLIFE SERVICES STUDY ON ORAL RABIES**
14 **VACCINES IN ARCTIC REGIONS OF THE**
15 **UNITED STATES.**

16 Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment
17 of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall conduct a
18 feasibility study—

19 (1) on the delivery of oral rabies vaccines to
20 wildlife reservoir species that are directly or indi-
21 rectly connected to the transmission of rabies to
22 Tribal members living in Arctic regions of the
23 United States; and

24 (2) that—

1 (A) evaluates the efficacy of the vaccines
2 described in paragraph (1); and

3 (B) makes recommendations to improve
4 the delivery of those vaccines.

5 **SEC. 5. ONE HEALTH FRAMEWORK.**

6 Section 2235(b) of the Prepare for and Respond to
7 Existing Viruses, Emerging New Threats, and Pandemics
8 Act (42 U.S.C. 300hh–37(b)) is amended by striking “and
9 the Secretary of the Interior” and inserting “, the Sec-
10 retary of the Interior, and the Director of the Indian
11 Health Service”.

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