

Getting to the Bottom of the Veterinary Technician Shortage in Minnesota

“Veterinary Technician Workforce Enhancement Act”

By Dr. Al Balay

The MVMA Veterinary Technician Committee introduced legislation leading to licensure of Veterinary Technicians that we expect to be on the legislative agenda when the session starts on January 31, 2022. In this article #9 in the series, we share the status of pending legislation, what it will take to get the bill passed, information on how you can help and other updates.

Draft legislation was introduced in April 2021 into the MN House by Representative John Huot (House File 2553). Senator Gary Dahmes is interested in introducing this legislation into the MN Senate. We are currently in the process of identifying co-authors in both the House and Senate. Personal communication from a constituent is key in the legislative process so MVMA and MAVT Leadership would like to ask DVM's and CVT's to participate by contacting your legislator. Remember your legislators work for you! We will soon be identifying technicians and veterinarians to contact key legislators on both the Agriculture and Health & Human Services Committees. The bills will be heard in both the House and Senate legislative committees. In addition, we need to determine individuals who can assist us with giving testimony in committee meetings with legislators. Please contact Al at allen.balay77@gmail.com if you are interested in providing testimony or Kim at horne003@umn.edu

The MVMA lobbyists will be preparing an email to go out to MVMA veterinarians and all Certified Veterinary Technicians requesting that you contact your legislators during the legislative session to ask for their support of the bill. You will get the names of your legislators as well as an email message that you can customize and send to your senator or representative. Our lobbyists make this process very easy and the contact with **your** legislator makes a difference!

The MVMA Day at the Capitol is scheduled for Wednesday March 9, 2022. We will be asking both veterinarians and technicians to set up meetings with their legislators and we will supply important talking points and resources. Also, you could be accompanied by either one of the MVMA lobbyists or one of us that is working on this legislation. Thanks to those who have already offered to meet with or contact your legislator!

On January 13th, MVMA will be hosting an event in the metro area to share the information about the licensure initiative. The Twin Cities regional town hall meeting will be at Crooked Pint and Ale House in Maplewood, MN. This continuing education event is for both veterinarians and technicians and includes beverages and a meal. Please check the MVMA website for more information. Additionally, there will be several sessions for all MVMA and MAVT participants at the annual meeting in February 2022 where presentations will touch on ideas to retain and utilize veterinary technicians along with updates on the legislative initiative.

The MVMA and MAVT leadership believe that licensure and title protection will help retention, but it is critical that the issues that cause technicians to leave the career field be addressed. Salary, benefits, utilization, opportunity for career advancement, and burnout are pieces of the puzzle. There was an excellent article in the September 15, 2021, edition of JAVMA titled “*Are we in a veterinary workforce crisis*”. I encourage you to go to this link to read this important article: <https://www.avma.org/javma-news/2021-09-15/are-we-veterinary-workforce-crisis>

It is important to emphasize that licensing is NOT mandatory. If a veterinary technician chooses not to get licensed, they can continue to work as they have been with their current employer. The difference would be that the title “Licensed Veterinary Technician” would be protected by the Veterinary Practice Act. The certification process would cease in Minnesota and the title “Certified Veterinary Technician/CVT” would no longer be valid to use. The proposed legislation identifies those not licensed as veterinary technicians to be titled veterinary assistants.

MVMA and MAVT leadership believes that the time is NOW to license veterinary technicians to help retain them in the career field and improve the workforce situation. It is believed that licensure will attract applicants to veterinary technician educational programs and promote greater numbers of graduates sitting for the Veterinary Technician National Examination. Not only does this lead to more technicians exhibiting entry-level competency, but this allows for future career advancement by meeting the requirement of being a credentialed veterinary technician in order to pursue a Veterinary Technician Specialty designation via NAVTA (National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America).

Be sure to check out the resource available on the MVMA website under the vet tech link for more information. You will also find contact information if you have questions or concerns.