

- SUBJECT:** Revising requirements for a special veterinary license
- COMMITTEE:** Agriculture and Livestock — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Swinford, McReynolds, Hardcastle, Brown, Hupp, Kolkhorst
0 nays
3 absent — Christian, Miller, Green
- WITNESSES:** For — Chris Copeland, Texas Veterinary Medical Association
Against — None
On — Ron Allen, Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners; Jim Butler, Texas A&M University System
- BACKGROUND:** Occupations Code, sec. 801.256 allows the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners to issue special licenses to applicants who meet certain criteria. Applicants are eligible for a special license if they:
- ! are at least 21 years of age and a graduate of a board-approved veterinary medicine program at a higher education institution, and
 - ! pass the jurisprudence section of the board’s licensing examination.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2475 would allow the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners to issue a special license to a person who provided the board with a written affirmation from the dean of a board-approved veterinary medicine program at a Texas higher education institution or from the executive director of either the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) or the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL). The affidavit would have to state that the applicant met a critical need for staffing at the higher education institution, TAHC, or TVMDL and was certified by a nationally recognized veterinary speciality board or was eligible for certification. This affidavit could substitute for the requirement that the applicant be a graduate of a board-approved veterinary medicine program.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2475 would broaden the pool of qualified applicants for vacant veterinary positions at Texas higher education institutions, TAHC, and TVMDL. Some of these programs are having difficulty filling certain positions on their staffs because private speciality veterinary practices can pay these specialists more. This bill would allow speciality veterinary positions to be filled quickly when necessary.

The regular process for a foreign veterinarian to become licensed in the United States can be long and very expensive. These applicants must pass the board examination in the state where they wish to practice. Most states, including Texas, require veterinarians applying for licensure to be graduates of the American Veterinary Medical Association or hold an Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates (ECFVG) certificate. To obtain an ECFVG certificate, a veterinarian must complete, in order, four basic steps that usually take one to two years to complete:

- ! complete an application, pay the \$275 registration fee, and provide proof of graduation;
- ! prove fluency in English by satisfactory completion of the Test of English as a Foreign Language, Test of Spoken English, and Test of Written English;
- ! pass the National Board Examination and the Clinical Competency Test; and
- ! either pass a clinical proficiency exam approved by ECFVG, complete satisfactorily a year of evaluated clinical experience, or obtain certification by an American Board of Veterinary Specialities speciality board for species-specific or discipline-specific practice.

The bill would help Texas higher education institutions, TAHC, and TVMDL hire the best qualified applicants. These organizations often post employment openings on the Internet. Occasionally a graduate of a foreign veterinary school is the best qualified candidate. More foreign graduates are specializing in different fields of veterinary science, are coming to the United States to become board certified, and wish to stay.

CSHB 2475 would not result in taking veterinary positions away from U.S. candidates. A foreign veterinarian would qualify for the special license only if the applicant met a critical staffing need at a Texas higher education institution, TAHC, or TVMDL and the position could not be filled by a qualified U.S. candidate.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 2475 would increase competition for U.S. veterinarians by allowing foreign veterinarians to apply for these positions. U.S. veterinarians should be given preference for employment.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

The bill would be unfair to foreign veterinarians who wish to practice in the United States but are specialized in a particular veterinary field. These foreign veterinarians still would have to go through the lengthy process for ECFVG certification.

NOTES:

The committee substitute added the criterion that the applicant be certified by a nationally recognized veterinary board or be eligible for that certification. Also, the substitute would require a written affirmation rather than a written statement.