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Montana passes licensure bill for veterinary technicians

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After years of work by local veterinary technicians, the Montana legislature passed a bill establishing licensing and qualifications for their profession in the state. The state was one of only a handful of remaining states that does not require credentialing for veterinary technicians.

The bill, [SB 106](#), creates qualifications for veterinary technicians under the Montana Board of Veterinary Medicine, outlines a scope of practice for veterinary technicians, and penalizes an individual for falsely claiming to be licensed. It also adds a member to the veterinary board to represent licensed veterinary technicians. The bill awaited Gov. Greg Gianforte's signature as of press time in early May; if signed, it goes into effect at the beginning of 2023.

Leaders from the Big Sky Veterinary Technician Association and veterinarians in the state spearheaded the creation of the bill.



(From left) Harley Templeton, Shawnl Hansen, Marcia Cantrell, Dr. Tierney Olsen, Eli Olind, and Dr. Jeanne Ranking standing in the Montana State Capitol in Helena (Photo by Sarah Coffield)

Marcia Cantrell, certification coordinator for Big Sky VTA and a certified veterinary technician, said several years ago that she and other members of the Big Sky VTA board researched bill creation and started going to meetings of the Montana Board of Veterinary Medicine.

"We were met with a lot of resistance," Cantrell said. "They were afraid of change, but we slowly wore them down. ... Most people thought we were trying to limit what people who weren't licensed could do. That was our biggest challenge."

The bill language states that a licensed veterinary technician must have graduated from an AVMA Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities–accredited program and passed an examination such as the Veterinary Technician National Exam, among other things. The bill also allows individuals to obtain licensure by documenting 4,500 hours of experience and passing an examination approved by the Montana veterinary board.

Eli Olind, president-elect of Big Sky VTA and a certified veterinary technician, said these new regulations are a huge advance for the profession in the state.

"It was such a team of people getting this through," Olind said. "A ton of veterinarians really stepped up a lot and testified in favor and on how it will improve their practices."

The next steps for Montana veterinary technicians involve the rule-making process, which includes conversations around scope of practice and tasks that can be completed under specific kinds of supervision. The meetings will be held through the Montana veterinary board and available to the public.

Ed Carlson, president of the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America and a certified veterinary technician, said the association commends the members of the Big Sky VTA for their efforts and congratulates them on their success.

"As we all know, veterinary technicians are educated members of the veterinary team and provide essential nursing care for animals," Carlson said. "Establishing a consistent standard of licensure for veterinary technicians around the nation is one of NAVTA's primary goals, so we applaud Montana's step in the right direction."

Last year, Utah also passed a bill that established credentialing criteria for state-certified veterinary technicians.

Most states regulate the credentialing of veterinary technicians, but several do not, consisting of Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wyoming, according to NAVTA. These states recognize private certifications from veterinary medical or technician associations that individuals may pursue.

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