

POLITICS & POLICY

Success Breeds Legislation

From licensure and non-competes to veterinary technician roles and telemedicine, 2026 is bringing legal and regulatory changes to veterinary medicine.

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Every day, the Animal Policy Group monitors all legislatures, veterinary medical boards, and pharmacy boards throughout the country. Political activity has escalated, and the 2026 legislative sessions will greatly impact pet health care in the United States. Legislatures throughout America have focused on the shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technicians, access to care, non-compete agreements, and various pharmacy regulations. The Rhode Island and Pennsylvania legislatures are also considering non-economic damages.

Progress will continue, as many state legislatures are still at work, but here's a veterinary legislative update as of late April 2026.

Veterinary Technicians and Veterinary Professional Associates

For decades, the veterinary technician profession has struggled with high turnover, low compensation, and a glass ceiling on clinical duties. This year's legislative sessions have addressed these issues head-on, focusing on three pillars: mandatory licensure, expanded clinical scope, and the creation of mid-level practitioners. These bills are designed to formalize and expand the role of veterinary technicians:

- **Georgia HB1408 and Kentucky HB212** allow veterinary technicians to administer rabies vaccines under direct supervision. The bills require a veterinarian to be in the facility, but not in the exam room.
- **Mississippi HB514** expands the veterinary technician's voice by requiring one certified veterinary technician to sit as a member on the state's Board of Veterinary Medicine.
- **Colorado HB1198** opens more pathways toward veterinary technician education by removing the requirement that acceptable programs be accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

By granting technicians more autonomy and professional authority, states hope to reduce burnout and increase employment longevity. For pet owners, this translates to shorter wait times and more affordable routine care as technicians take the lead on preventive medicine and minor procedures.

On the mid-level practitioner front, **Florida SB796** authorizes the creation of a veterinary professional associate.



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The bill was blocked by a single legislator at the last minute, but its ultimate passage seems likely.

Licensing Portability

States are taking notice that veterinarians, like many other professionals, want the flexibility to move and establish practices in different states, often to accommodate spouses whose jobs require relocation.

Removing barriers to interstate migration benefits veterinarians and their patients. Many states still enforce onerous requirements for a veterinarian to acquire a license to practice in a new state, even though initial requirements for licensure are identical in virtually all states. Today, legislatures are paying attention to lifestyle trends and job mobility. The concept of license portability is a win-win, and we're seeing the movement pick up speed.

Multiple license portability bills have passed this year:

- ▶ **Colorado HB1198** requires the state Board of Veterinary Medicine to update its existing process for license by endorsement, with the intent to expedite the process.
- ▶ **Florida HB1509** removes the requirement that an applicant must have held an active license in another state for the three years immediately preceding their application.
- ▶ **Indiana SB0056** simplifies and streamlines the state's license requirements.
- ▶ **Maryland SB418** allows members of the U.S. Foreign Service and their spouses to practice for the duration of their service agreement.

Non-Compete Clauses in Employment Agreements

Historically, non-compete agreements were reserved for executives holding trade secrets. They are now commonplace across all industries, covering roughly 30 million Americans. While

► Business

many states are attempting to prohibit the usage of these agreements against low-wage workers, some legislatures are banning these practices in their entirety or limiting their usage to only high-wage employees or other special circumstances.

- **Virginia SB128** expands protections against non-competes to include “health care professionals.” And **Virginia SB170** restricts any employer from entering into a covenant not to compete with any low-wage employee.
- **Washington HB1155** prohibits non-competition agreements in the state and renders all such agreements void and unenforceable regardless of where they were originally signed. Non-solicitation agreements are still permitted but must be narrowly construed.

Many non-compete bills are still circulating in legislative committees and could see movement this session. This topic continues to be heavily debated across the country, with many states moving toward strong restrictions. It’s safe to conclude that we are witnessing the final chapter of the restrictive covenant as we once knew it. As federal efforts to ban non-competes stall, individual states are stepping up to redraw the boundaries of American labor.

Telemedicine

Veterinary telemedicine has emerged not just as a convenience but as a vital bridge to ensure animal welfare amid a national shortage of veterinary professionals. While some

states are paving the way to more telemedicine access, other states are passing legislation restricting access.

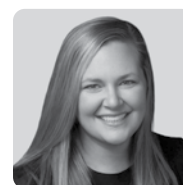
- **Washington HB2247** allows for an initial exam via telehealth if the animal cannot access veterinary care due to transportation challenges, unavailability of in-person appointments for a significant amount of time, or an urgent condition that could result in suffering if medical care is delayed.
- **Alabama SB85**, on the opposite end of the spectrum, prohibits a veterinarian-client-patient relationship from being established via telemedicine.
- **South Carolina H3223** similarly codifies the in-person requirement for a VCPR.

We’ll see more changes before 2026 ends. As states jump on the telemedicine bandwagon, two things are clear: The digital revolution in veterinary medicine is here to stay, but some states won’t change their mind overnight. **TVB**



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A SUPREME COURT UPDATE

In March, the United States Supreme Court, in *Chiles v. Salazar*, overturned a Colorado law empowering its state board overseeing counselors to prohibit licensed counselors from discussing or providing professional guidance in certain cases involving sexual identity. The court emphasized the First Amendment protections for professionals licensed by state licensing boards.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals took a similar stance regarding the Texas Veterinary Medical Board’s prohibition of a telemedicine veterinarian-client-patient relationship in *Hines v. Pardue* — a case the Supreme Court denied to review on April 20.

These decisions uphold a licensee’s First Amendment rights with professional speech against overreaching state licensing boards. They will have serious ramifications for all state professional boards in the U.S., including veterinary medical boards.

