Veterinarians are critical to a host of public sector roles. As the only professionals routinely practicing at the interface of animal health and human health, veterinarians’ unique expertise is critical to protecting public health, promoting animal health and welfare, bolstering food safety and security, advancing research, and educating the next generation of practitioners. PSLF helps make it financially possible for many veterinarians to pursue this career path.

### Why PSLF is important

Many public-sector positions require advanced levels of training to fill demanding and specialized roles that are critical to ensuring community and societal needs are met. These individuals must devote years of their lives to rigorous educational programs in order to gain requisite knowledge, skills and experience needed to begin their careers, and many graduate with significant educational debt. This includes veterinarians and veterinary students.

Congress established PSLF in Oct. 2007 (P.L. 100-84) to encourage individuals to enter and remain employed in public service by offering student loan forgiveness after a minimum of 10 years in public service while making on-time loan payments.

PSLF is a critical recruitment and retention tool that helps to make it possible for many veterinarians to work full-time in eligible public-sector jobs where they promote animal health and welfare, protect public health, bolster food safety and security, and advance research and education. For example, many veterinarians in Federal government service serve at the GS-9 level, which begins at $56,000, through the GS-11 level, which begins at $68,000.

Veterinarians working full-time for federal, state, local, and Tribal governments; for the U.S. military, or for nonprofit / tax-exempt clinics, including animal shelters, are eligible for PSLF.

### Eligible student loans under PSLF

Only Direct Loans are eligible for PSLF; this includes Stafford and GradPLUS loans. Other Federal loans, such as the Federal Family Education Loan or the Federal Perkins Loan Program, do not qualify for PSLF, unless the borrower consolidates them into a Direct Consolidation Loan.

### PSLF participants must:

- Work full-time for a total of 10 years in an eligible job. Full-time is the greater of employer’s definition of full-time: 30 hours per week or working multiple qualifying part-time jobs that equal at least 30 hours.
- Must make 120 separate, qualifying student loan payments (10 years) within 15 days of the monthly due date. Payments made when not required and overpayments do not qualify towards the 120 qualifying payments. Lump sum payments count as one payment.
- Borrowers who want confirmation that employment and payments qualify should submit the Employment Certification Form to the U.S. Department of Education’s FedLoan Servicing.

### PSLF statistics

Since the program was created in 2007, the first cohort of borrowers became eligible in October 2017.

- As of September 2018, 423 out of 41,221 applicants have been approved for loan forgiveness.
  - 32,409 were denied for not meeting requirements.
  - 11,892 were denied due to missing information.
- As of September 2018, the program has disbursed $12.3 million in loan forgiveness to 206 borrowers.

### PSLF estimated cost

Congressional Budget Office estimated PSLF would save $9-b/10 years and its elimination would save $22-b/10 years. However, without additional data, the true potential cost of the program is not known.
PSLF under attack

Originally signed into law by President George W. Bush, the PSLF Program has historically benefitted from bipartisan support; however, it’s future is at risk as Congress considers higher education reforms. AVMA is opposed to efforts to cap or eliminate the program for future borrowers.

- President Donald Trump’s FY 2018 and 2019 budgets proposed ending PSLF. Former President Barack Obama proposed to cap PSLF forgiveness at $57,500.

- During the 115th Congress, several legislative proposals originating in the House of Representatives called for limiting PSLF forgiveness to undergraduates, capping forgiveness at $57,500, or to end the program for future borrowers.

**AVMA urges Congress not reverse course on the promise made when PSLF was created**

Because PSLF is so important to the profession and ensuring an adequate public-sector workforce, we ask for your support in preserving the PSLF Program for current and future borrowers. Veterinarians, veterinary students, and prospective students are planning their career paths and making life decisions based on the promise made in 2007.

PSLF not only allows the opportunity for individuals who may not otherwise have the financial capacity to pursue a desired career path, but the program truly provides a public benefit by ensuring communities are able to attract professionals to meet their needs. Veterinarians who borrow carry significant educational debt, making larger, private sector salaries more attractive.

**GAO Report on PSLF Administration**

In September 2019 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report examining the Department of Education’s implementation of the PSLF Program. Specifically, GAO examined the number of borrowers pursuing PSLF and the extent to which Education has conducted outreach to increase borrower awareness of program eligibility requirements and extent to which Education has provided key information to the PSLF servicer and borrowers.

**GAO found that Education does not provide key information to the PSLF servicer and borrowers.**

GAO recommended that the Department of Education:

1. Develop a timeline for issuing a comprehensive guidance and instructions document for the PSLF servicer;
2. Provide the PSLF servicer and borrowers with additional information about qualifying employers;
3. Standardize payment information other loan servicers provide to the PSLF servicer; and
4. Ensure borrowers receive sufficiently detailed information to help identify potential payment counting errors.

The Department concurred with GAO’s recommendations.

**GAO also detailed information on borrowers seeking certification of loans and employment eligibility:**

![PSLF Certification Request and Forgiveness Applications, as of April 2018](image-url)