



Update on the Veterinary Services to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act



*Senator Murkowski at a meeting with Indian Health Services.
Photo Courtesy of United States Senate - Office of Lisa Murkowski*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On February 18, 2025, Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska reintroduced S. 620 “*Veterinary Services to Improve Public Health in Rural Communities Act*”. Originally introduced in the previous Congress, the bill saw little movement at that time. If passed, the bill would help Indian tribes and organizations to address the threats of zoonotic diseases, those that can be spread from vertebrate animals to humans or vice versa. Recognizing its importance, the Navajo Nation Council passed a resolution in support of the bill on August 22, 2024, and since then the Navajo Nation Washington Office has continued to advocate for its passage.

On March 5, 2025, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs reviewed the bill, chose not to make any changes, and voted to send it to the full Senate with a recommendation that it be passed. It would fund public health veterinary services directly by the agency or under Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act contracts and self-governance compacts and assign veterinary officers from the United States Public Health Service to prevent and control rabies and other zoonotic disease transmission in IHS service areas. NNWO is currently engaging on advocacy in Congress regarding this bill, to show the Nation’s commitment to its citizens health.