

To the office of U.S. Representative Ted Lieu

Re: HR 9319 (119th Congress), Keeping Pets and Families Together Act • Latest action (2026-06-15): Referred to the House Committee on Agriculture.
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Pet Reunification Microchip Grant Act of 2025

The measure, as described from the official record: To increase the rate of microchipping for dogs and cats in animal shelters and similar establishments so that lost pets can be more easily reunited with their owners.

THE PROPOSAL

This Act establishes a voluntary, time-limited grant program within the Department of Agriculture to assist animal shelters and similar establishments in microchipping dogs and cats prior to adoption or release. The Secretary of Agriculture shall award competitive grants to states, local governments, or nonprofit organizations that operate or contract with shelters. Grantees must provide a 25% non-federal match, and may use funds solely for the purchase of microchips, scanners, and training for shelter staff. No shelter shall be required to participate, and no state shall be penalized for non-participation. The program shall be administered through existing USDA rural development or animal health offices, and shall not expand federal regulatory authority over shelter operations. Grantees must report annually on the number of animals microchipped and the number of reunifications attributed to the program. The program shall sunset after five years, with a one-time renewal possible only by a separate act of Congress.

OPERATIVE PROVISIONS (VFA PROPOSAL)

Funding Source	Offset by reducing unobligated balances in the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) by an equal amount, or by a 0.5% across-the-board reduction in non-defense discretionary spending for the fiscal year.
Funding Amount	\$50 million per year for five years, for a total of \$250 million.
Sunset Years	5 years
Oversight Body	Office of Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture, with an annual report to the House Committee on Agriculture and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.
Enforcement Mechanism	Grant recipients must comply with program terms; failure to use funds as specified or to submit required reports results in repayment of unspent funds and ineligibility for future grants. No criminal penalties.
Effective Date	October 1, 2025, or 90 days after enactment, whichever is later.

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS

- Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 (Spending Power – general welfare)

- Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 (Commerce Clause – limited to voluntary grants, not regulation of intrastate activity)
- Tenth Amendment (preserves state and local discretion; no commandeering)

Concerns with the measure as written:

- The bill relies on the Commerce Clause (Article I, Section 8, Clause 3) to regulate intrastate shelter operations, which may be a stretch if microchipping is not directly tied to interstate commerce.
- Cooperative agreements could be seen as coercive if they impose conditions on states that effectively commandeer state resources, raising Tenth Amendment issues.

WHY BOTH SIDES CAN BACK IT (VFA'S ASSESSMENT)

Honors Democratic priorities: promotes animal welfare, reunites pets with families, and provides federal support for local shelters. Honors Republican priorities: limits federal role to voluntary grants with matching requirements, includes a sunset, avoids new mandates on states or shelters, and offsets spending to reduce the deficit.

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