Revitalize Rural America Act (RRAA)

Section-by-Section Summary

Purpose. RRAA is a broad rural policy package addressing health care access and workforce retention, infrastructure capacity, agriculture, public-service recruitment, law enforcement, affordable housing, and disaster resilience.

Sec. 1. Short Title; Table of Contents

Provides that the Act may be cited as the "Always Remember Our Rural America Act of 2026" and sets out the bill's seven-title structure.

TITLE I — RURAL AND UNDERSERVED HEALTH CARE

Sec. 1001. Removing Geographic Requirements for Telehealth Services

Permanently removes Medicare geographic restrictions for telehealth services beginning on enactment.

Sec. 1002. Expanding Originating Sites

Makes permanent the broader Medicare originating-site flexibilities that otherwise sunset, allowing beneficiaries to receive covered telehealth from a wider range of locations.

Sec. 1003. Expanding Authority for Practitioners Eligible to Furnish Telehealth Services

Authorizes the Secretary of HHS to waive limitations on which practitioner types may furnish Medicare telehealth when clinically appropriate, with program-integrity safeguards, annual stakeholder comment, and periodic review.

Sec. 1004. Federally Qualified Health Centers and Rural Health Clinics

Makes FQHCs and rural health clinics permanent telehealth distant-site providers and, beginning in 2028, pays qualifying telehealth as FQHC or RHC services under the applicable payment methodology while treating related costs as allowable costs.

Sec. 1005. Native American Health Facilities

Removes Medicare originating-site restrictions for Indian Health Service, Tribal, and Native Hawaiian health facilities beginning January 1, 2027, while limiting the originating-site facility fee where the facility qualifies only under this new rule.

Sec. 1006. Repeal of Six-Month In-Person Visit Requirement for Telemental Health Services

Eliminates the statutory six-month in-person visit requirement tied to Medicare telemental health and removes the related sunset language for RHCs and FQHCs.

Sec. 1007. Waiver of Telehealth Requirements During Public Health Emergencies

Broadens the Social Security Act emergency-waiver framework so telehealth requirements may be waived during HHS-declared public health emergencies.

Sec. 1008. Use of Telehealth in Recertification for Hospice Care

Makes permanent the use of telehealth for the face-to-face encounter associated with hospice recertification and directs GAO to report within three years on utilization, oversight, and related impacts.

Sec. 1101. Clarification for Fraud and Abuse Laws Regarding Technologies Provided to Beneficiaries

Creates a civil-monetary-penalty exception for certain technologies provided by Medicare providers or suppliers to support telehealth, remote patient monitoring, or other technology-enabled services, subject to anti-solicitation and regulatory safeguards.

Sec. 1102. Additional Resources for Telehealth Oversight

Authorizes $3 million annually for FY2026 through FY2030 for the HHS Inspector General to conduct audits, investigations, oversight, and enforcement related to telehealth and other technology-enabled services.

Sec. 1103. Addressing Significant Outlier Billing Patterns for Telehealth Services

Requires HHS to identify significant telehealth billing outliers compared with peers, notify affected practitioners with comparative and billing-guidance information, publish aggregate data, and use Telehealth Resource Centers to provide technical assistance and education.

Sec. 1203*. Beneficiary Engagement on Telehealth

Requires HHS to issue telehealth accessibility resources, guidance, and training for beneficiaries, providers, and health IT vendors, including for people with limited English proficiency and disabilities, and to study strategies for improving telehealth engagement in underserved communities.

Sec. 1202. Provider Supports on Telehealth

Requires HHS to develop provider education and training on Medicare telehealth payment requirements, privacy and security, and serving underserved, high-risk, and vulnerable populations.

Sec. 1203*. Ensuring the Inclusion of Telehealth in Measuring Quality of Care

Requires HHS to review quality measures for telehealth, identify gaps in outcomes and patient-experience measurement, consult technical experts, issue implementation guidance, and report to Congress within two years.

Sec. 1204. Posting Information on Telehealth Services

Requires CMS, within 180 days and quarterly thereafter, to publish Medicare telehealth utilization, expenditure, geography, provider-type, and other outcome information.

Sec. 1301. Conrad State 30 Program

Extends the Conrad State 30 J-1 physician waiver program for three years after enactment, effective as if enacted on September 30, 2026.

Sec. 1302. Retaining Physicians Who Have Practiced in Medically Underserved Communities

Provides immigrant-visa relief for physicians who complete qualifying waiver service, including their spouses and children, while preserving the requirement that the physician satisfy the underlying service obligation before final approval.

Sec. 1303. Employment Protections for Physicians

Modernizes Conrad waiver employment rules and adds physician protections, including clearer start periods, flexibility in qualifying status, contract transparency, restrictions on non-competes, protections when employment ends, recapture of waiver slots when physicians move between states, and exceptions where employer violations or other extenuating circumstances justify a change.

Sec. 1304. Allotment of Conrad 30 Waivers

Creates a utilization-based mechanism to increase each state's Conrad waiver allotment from 30 to 35 and then in five-waiver increments when national utilization thresholds are met, with reductions possible if utilization materially declines but never below 30. Also allows limited waivers for academic medical centers under specified public-interest conditions.

Sec. 1305. Physician Immigration Procedures and Definitions

Adds dual-intent protection for physicians seeking graduate medical education, clarifies National Interest Waiver rules and service-counting, recognizes qualifying foreign medical degrees as advanced degrees, provides short-term work authorization for certain physicians completing residencies, and addresses application of the foreign-residence requirement to spouses and children.

Sec. 1306. Annual Conrad State 30 J-1 Visa Waiver Program Statistical Report

Requires USCIS to report annually to Congress and HHS on Conrad State 30 admissions, disaggregated by state.

Sec. 1401. Employee Retention Credit for Certain Rural Hospital Employers

Creates a refundable payroll tax credit for qualifying rural hospitals equal to 100 percent of qualified wages, including allocable health-plan expenses, for qualifying full-time health care, support, and essential-operations employees. Qualified wages are capped at $15,000 per employee per year. Eligible hospitals generally must be in a rural area and have averaged at least 100 full-time employees in the prior year. The credit applies to calendar quarters beginning after December 31, 2026.

Sec. 1501. Study

GAO will conduct a study on Federal and State regulations applicable to rural healthcare and identify opportunities to improve coordination, reduce duplication, simplify compliance, and increase access.

TITLE II — INFRASTRUCTURE

Sec. 2001. Federal Grant-Writing Services and Technical Assistance for Rural Communities

Expands federal rural-development technical assistance to include grant-writing and technical support for entities seeking federal grants or loans and serving eligible rural, persistent-poverty, lower-income, or Tribal areas.

Sec. 2002. Study on Accessibility of Federal Programs in Rural Communities

Requires GAO, within 12 months, to catalogue federal grant and loan programs available to covered rural entities, evaluate program use, and recommend ways Congress and the Executive Branch can make them more accessible and beneficial.

TITLE III — AGRICULTURE

Sec. 3001. Comprehensive Study on Cost of Agriculture Regulations

Requires GAO, within 12 months, to assess the financial impact of federal regulations on U.S. farmers and recommend regulatory or statutory changes to reduce compliance costs.

Sec. 3002. Exclusion of Gain from Sale of Qualified Farmland

Excludes gain from qualifying farmland sales to beginning farmers or qualified family members, capped at $500,000 for an individual and $1 million for a joint return, subject to buyer-specific lifetime limits. Qualified farmland generally must have been used for agricultural production during the preceding five years. The section includes five-year continued-use rules, recapture, anti-abuse provisions, certification and reporting requirements, and applies to sales after December 31, 2026.

TITLE IV — EDUCATION

Sec. 4001. Enhanced Loan Repayment Program

Creates a rural public-service incentive under Public Service Loan Forgiveness by cancelling the remaining eligible Direct Loan balance after 100 consecutive qualifying monthly payments, rather than 120, for borrowers who work in qualifying public-service jobs in rural areas throughout the payment period and at forgiveness.

TITLE V — PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT AND SAFETY

Sec. 5001. Deduction for Essential Rural Employees

Creates an above-the-line income tax deduction equal to 20 percent of qualified compensation, up to $10,000 annually, for full-time state, local, or Tribal employees working in rural areas in specified essential public-service fields. Covered services include public safety, public works and utilities, engineering, planning and permitting, public health and human services, administrative services, legal and judicial services, and agricultural, natural-resource, and environmental services. The deduction applies after 2026 and sunsets after 2035.

Sec. 5002. Grant Program for Local Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation

Authorizes DOJ grants to financially assist local law enforcement agencies with fewer than 350 employees in obtaining or renewing qualified accreditation. Authorizes $10 million for FY2027 and limits funds to accreditation-related fees and assessments.

Sec. 5003. Increased COPS Hiring Grants for Small and Rural Law Enforcement Agencies

Raises the COPS hiring or rehiring grant cap to $150,000 per career law-enforcement officer for rural agencies with jurisdiction over populations under 50,000.

TITLE VI — HOUSING

Sec. 6001. Selection Criteria Under Qualified Allocation Plans

Adds Native American affordable-housing needs to the statutory selection criteria that state housing credit agencies must consider in Low-Income Housing Tax Credit qualified allocation plans, effective for allocations after 2026.

Sec. 6002. Inclusion of Indian Areas as Difficult Development Areas

Treats qualifying Indian areas as Difficult Development Areas for LIHTC purposes, allowing the enhanced basis where statutory conditions are met for projects assisted or financed under Native American housing programs or sponsored or controlled by qualifying Tribal entities.

Sec. 6003. Inclusion of Rural Areas as Difficult Development Areas

Treats qualifying non-metropolitan and Housing Act rural areas identified in a state's qualified allocation plan as Difficult Development Areas for LIHTC purposes, effective for buildings placed in service after 2026.

Sec. 6004. Uniform Income Eligibility for Rural Projects

Removes the special rural-project income rule in section 42(i)(8), providing more uniform income-eligibility treatment for rural LIHTC projects beginning after 2026.

Sec. 6005. Individual Household Disaster Mitigation Program

Creates a Stafford Act program providing grants through states and Tribal governments for pre-disaster mitigation on at-risk homes. The program establishes hazard-risk areas, technical assistance, state mitigation plans, income limits, mitigation standards, insurer guidance, and grants of up to $10,000 per household, indexed for inflation, for qualifying wildfire, wind, flood, earthquake, and related resilience improvements.

Sec. 6006. Credit for Disaster Mitigation Expenditures

Creates a 30 percent federal tax credit for taxpayer-paid qualifying disaster-mitigation expenditures on owned or leased real property, coordinates the credit with state reimbursements and other tax benefits, and applies to expenditures paid or incurred after enactment.

Sec. 6007. Exclusion of Amounts Received from State-Based Catastrophe Loss Mitigation Programs

Excludes from gross income qualifying state, local, joint-powers, or state-regulated catastrophe-mitigation payments used to reduce windstorm, earthquake, or wildfire damage. The exclusion applies to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2020 and allows retroactive claims through amended returns.

TITLE VII — DEFINITION OF RURAL

Sec. 7001. Definition of Rural

Establishes a cross-cutting rural definition for provisions that do not otherwise define the term. Covered areas include certain rural-development grant areas, persistent-poverty areas, disadvantaged communities with median household income below 80 percent of the state median, and Tribal areas.