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certification of a state Meat Inspection Program under federal law and to qualify for federal cost-share assistance to operate a state program. To understand the committee amendments it's necessary to understand the federal-state relationship under the Federal Meat Inspection Act and the Federal Poultry Inspection Act. The federal government's formal relationship with the states with respect to meat inspection is traced back to amendments to federal laws in 1967 and 1968. Prior to this time, both the states and the federal government performed meat inspection independently. While state meat inspections can continue to exist with amendments, Congress assigned primary oversight responsibility to the federal government. Current federal law both limits and encourages state meat inspection programs the following ways. One, state programs must be annually certified as administering inspection standards at least equal to federal standards. Two, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with states operating certified programs, providing technical and financial assistance and inspector training. The federal government may reimburse states up to 50 percent cost share. Three, the state inspected meat and poultry is limited to intrastate commerce. Only meat from federally inspected plants may be shipped interstate. Those states not meeting requirements for certification are, quote, designated, unquote, for federal inspection. No meat, poultry, or meat and poultry products originating in a plant located in a designated state may be entered into commerce unless federally inspected. Nebraska is currently among those states designated under regulations of the Food Safety Inspection Service. In order for the state to begin state inspection, there's a fairly involved certification process which culminates in a federal register notice to remove Nebraska from the list of designated states. The committee amendments attempt to facilitate this process by allowing the Department of Agriculture to hire a program administrator. He will be responsible for coordinating activities necessary to bring the state of Nebraska to a level to meet federal certification requirements. It is anticipated that the individual would...that individual would continue in that position, overseeing the program once it is up and running. The amendments would authorize the department to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture for financial, technical and other assistance to develop and