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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:**Megan Taylor |
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**Heller Presses Interior Department to Implement His Bill to Help Alleviate Nevada’s Affordable Housing Crisis**

*Heller to Secretary Zinke: Implement Program that Expedites the Sale of Federal Lands*

**WASHINGTON –** U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) urged U.S. Secretary of the Interior (DOI) Secretary Ryan Zinke to help alleviate the impact of the affordable housing crisis in Nevada by using the Department’s authorities to free upfederal lands in Nevada so that communities can develop single and multi-family housing units to ultimately increase affordable housing options.Specifically, Heller pushed Secretary Zinke to [implement his bipartisan legislation that reauthorized the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA)*,* a program that allows DOI to expedite the sale of federal lands that are already eligible for disposal](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=2B11FD8B-49DC-4774-A2DD-FE28B352BD9D). The Heller-backed program, which also ensures the proceeds from the land sales are used to acquire high-value conservation lands, serves as a critical tool for states like Nevada to address soaring housing costs and break down barriers to the development of new housing projects given that 85 percent of Nevada’s lands are managed by the federal government.

Nevada is one of the fastest growing states in both population and economic expansion, and as a result Nevada is experiencing a lack of affordable housing because the demand for it is outpacing the supply. According to recent [data](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/nevada/articles/2018-03-17/coalition-nevada-rental-housing-is-least-affordable-in-us), Nevada ranks last among states that provide affordable rental housing to low-income families. In March, it was [reported](https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/nevada/articles/2018-03-17/coalition-nevada-rental-housing-is-least-affordable-in-us) that rising housing costs in Reno, Nevada surpassed a 10-year record.

*“This year, I worked successfully to pass a permanent reauthorization of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), which allows your department to sell lands already marked for disposal in an expedited fashion while ensuring the sale’s proceeds go toward acquiring lands with higher conservation values.  I respectfully request that you quickly implement the reauthorization of FLTFA, ensuring that communities across my state are able to acquire federal lands marked for disposal in an expedited manner to help alleviate some of our affordable housing shortage,”* **Heller wrote** **to Secretary Zinke.** “*While we continue to seek solutions to address affordable housing issues in Nevada, the U.S. Department of the Interior can continue to play a key role in helping Nevadans who are in need and those who are working toward the American Dream of affordable homeownership.”*

Before it expired in 2011, FLTFA allowed the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service in the western United States to use the proceeds from sales of certain federally designated areas to protect lands of exceptional conservation value. Between its enactment in 2000 and its initial expiration in 2011, [FLTFA facilitated the sale of $88 million of lands in Nevada and contributed $35 million toward conservation projects](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/13dbf46a-e219-4a3c-9a45-4112a3faa9d1/FLTFA%20Reauthorization%20and%20Nevada.pdf). The program also assisted in better land management practices by disposing of isolated or difficult to manage parcels identified by the public land management agencies themselves.

“The Conservation Fund has been gratified by the reauthorization of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), a common-sense lands tool that achieves economic and conservation goals,” **said Mike Ford, Nevada and Southwest Director for The Conservation Fund**. “We support continued implementation of FLTFA as a critical tool for more efficient land management and expanded business operations, as well as the enhanced public access for outdoor recreation, hunting, and fishing; conservation of wildlife habitat; and protection of water quality made possible by FLTFA proceeds.”

In July, Heller and a group of bipartisan senators introduced the [Task Force on the Impact of the Affordable Housing Crisis Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/7/heller-group-of-bipartisan-senators-introduce-bill-to-create-affordable-housing-task-force), legislation that seeks to better understand and respond to America’s affordable housing crisis by creating a bipartisan affordable housing task force. In addition to evaluating and quantifying the impact of housing costs on government programs, the task force will also provide recommendations to Congress with the goal of developing commonsense solutions.

**The full text of the letter can be found** [**HERE**](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/f848098c-8d11-4a92-bfeb-c8f0fd825e0f/Sen.%20Heller%20-%20Secretary%20Zinke%20-%20FLTFA%20Affordable%20Housing.pdf) **and below:**

*Dear Secretary Zinke:*

*Thank you for your continued support for the State of Nevada.  As fellow Westerners, I have appreciated the opportunity to work with you and your department on issues that are unique to Western states and, in some cases, my home state of Nevada.  As you know, over the last few years, my state has experienced significant economic and population growth, and while communities across Nevada are prospering, many are facing an affordable housing shortage.  The U.S. Department of the Interior has the potential to play a critical role in helping address the affordable housing crisis in Nevada and throughout the entire West.*

*Through my work on the Senate Finance and Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committees, I have worked on solutions which would promote better access and development for affordable housing.  I helped introduce bipartisan legislation, the Task Force on the Impact of the Affordable Housing Crisis Act (S.3231), which would establish a task force to evaluate and make recommendations to Congress on how to improve federal programs to spur more affordable housing in Nevada and throughout the country.  I am also a strong supporter and advocate for expanding and strengthening the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit to address our nation’s affordable housing needs. These initiatives would go a long way toward addressing the needs of many families who are seeking affordable housing options.*

*One of the most significant issues affecting housing prices in Nevada is the lack of land to develop single and multi-family housing units.  Housing inventories remain significantly low in many parts of Nevada while demand for homes remains high.  Nevada communities need to develop new land to keep pace with the explosive growth in jobs and economic opportunities.  The fact that 85% of Nevada’s land is managed by the federal government creates many barriers to development, which increase housing prices.*

*A useful tool within your department’s purview is the strategic sale of federal lands already found suitable for disposal by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).  This year, I worked successfully to pass a permanent reauthorization of the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act (FLTFA), which allows your department to sell lands already marked for disposal in an expedited fashion while ensuring the sale’s proceeds go toward acquiring lands with higher conservation values.  I respectfully request that you quickly implement the reauthorization of FLTFA, ensuring that communities across my state are able to acquire federal lands marked for disposal in an expedited manner to help alleviate some of our affordable housing shortage.*

*I would also like to thank you for your continued support of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA). The SNPLMA program is not only one of your department’s most successful programs, but it is also responsible for the Las Vegas region’s unprecedented growth over the last 20 years and has invested $3.5 billion in conservation projects, hazardous fuels reduction, wildfire prevention, and a host of other important programs and projects across the state.  Keeping programs like this intact is vital to the continued well-being of Nevada.*

*While we continue to seek solutions to address affordable housing issues in Nevada, the U.S. Department of the Interior can continue to play a key role in helping Nevadans who are in need and those who are working toward the American Dream of affordable homeownership.  I appreciate your consideration of my request and respectfully ask for a response by October 26, 2018.  If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my staff member Scott Riplinger at 202-224-6244. Thank you for your efforts, and I look forward to working with you on this and other important issues in Nevada.*

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