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| August 1st, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

 **Heller Secures Funding to Fight Wildfires, $12 Million to Protect Lake Tahoe in Bill Approved by U.S. Senate**

*Heller Provisions to Preserve Nevada’s Clean Water Supply, Promote Smart Cities, Help Low-Income Families Maximize Tax Return Also Pass in Spending Bill*

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) announced that he secured funding for several of Nevada’s priorities, including resources to prevent wildfires on federal lands, support innovative fire prevention technologies like AlertTahoe, and $12 million to help Lake Tahoe fight wildfires and protect against invasive species, in a package of spending bills approved by the U.S. Senate today. Heller also authored five provisions – ranging from preserving Nevada’s clean water supply to promoting smart city solutions and [helping low-income families maximize their tax returns](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=707E6129-AF00-4D6C-A4F8-EB499F682668) – that were included in the Interior, Agriculture, Financial Services & General Government, and Transportation & Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act.

A long-time champion of supporting advancing wildfire prevention policies and protecting Lake Tahoe, Heller worked to see that the spending bill included $12 million to implement his [Lake Tahoe Restoration Reauthorization Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=43003FA6-8633-4CC9-9B54-6DCDF6AE71BB), bipartisan legislation that he introduced to help fight wildfires in the Tahoe Basin, protect against invasive species, and preserve Lake Tahoe for future generations. The spending bill also included an amendment that Heller authored to increase funding for cross-boundary fire control by $5 million in order to help prevent and mitigate the damage of wildfires on Nevada’s federal lands since more than 85 percent of the state is owned by the federal government.

In 2017, wildfires ravaged 1.2 million acres of land in Nevada and this year, the Martin Fire outside of Winnemucca has destroyed over half a million acres of public lands, grazing allotments, and private property, and the Perry Fire continues to burn southwest of Pyramid Lake and is not yet fully contained. To prevent the threat of wildfires, Heller has promoted and secured funding for innovative firefighting technologies such as AlertTahoe, a camera system in the Lake Tahoe Area used to help firefighters prevent, monitor, and detect deadly blazes. In June of 2018, [Heller urged the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to ensure that the Lake Tahoe Basin had the proper tools to protect its communities from the imminent threat of wildfires](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=8CCECB8D-C0C2-4B18-A27F-3C38C7B56DB7), as well as to fully fund and support the innovative AlertTahoe camera systems. [Thanks to Heller’s efforts, the spending bill that the U.S. Senate passed today qualified AlertTahoe](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/3/heller-secures-nv-priorities-in-spending-measure-bill-now-headed-to-the-president-s-desk) for federal wildfire funding [on top of the $226,000 that Heller previously secured](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AEAA0B1D-7D1D-4ED3-9692-7B5767389320) to help cover the implementation of four new cameras and upgrade 13 existing cameras in the Basin to better connect to the emergency response network.

“Last year, Nevada experienced devastating wildfires that burned more than 1.3 million acres of land – making it one of the worst fire seasons on record. This year isn’t looking much better as Nevada continues to battle the Perry Fire that broke out north of Reno and recover from the 60-mile long Martin Fire, named the largest wildfire in the country earlier this month,” **said Heller.** “One of my top priorities right now is ensuring that Nevada has the resources and tools that it needs to prevent, protect against, and mitigate the damage of wildfires that threaten our communities and the Lake Tahoe Basin that we love. I was proud to secure $5 million in additional funding to fight wildfires that know no jurisdictional boundaries, $12 million to implement my legislation, the Lake Tahoe Restoration Reauthorization Act, and ensure that AlertTahoe is eligible to receive funding to further protect the Lake Tahoe Basin from catastrophic wildfires. The AlertTahoe system has already helped prevent more than 50 fires in the Basin from reaching one acre in size, so I will continue to push my colleagues to recognize the importance of promoting innovative technologies like AlertTahoe that can expediently detect smoke and fire and enable firefighters to efficiently respond.”

Additionally, Heller also worked to make sure that the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program was fully funded. A strong advocate for PILT program and the Nevada communities that benefit from it,Heller recently welcomed U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke’s announcement that [17 local governments in Nevada are receiving a total of $26,987,166 under the 2018 PILT program, an increase of $802,376 from the previous fiscal year](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=76915388-8268-4692-BA59-3C9D534BD7C0).

The legislation also includes funding to help rural communities in Nevada and around the country support and expand broadband infrastructure investment and fight the opioid epidemic. It also increases funding for the agency that provides assistance to many Nevada cities through the Community Development Block Grant, as well as funding for homeless assistance programs that support veterans, youth, and survivors of domestic violence.

**BACKGROUND on Heller’s provisions included inthe Interior, Agriculture, Financial Services & General Government, and Transportation & Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act:**

* **Funding efforts to fight wildfires on federal lands (Heller Amendment #3540):** Increases funding for cross-boundary fire control by $5 million for hazardous fuels management activities, for a total of $20 million. This amendment would benefit areas where fires cross over jurisdictional lines, especially in Lake Tahoe where there are multiple municipalities within two states.
* **Advancing SmartCity solutions in Nevada (Heller Amendment #3428):** Requires the Department of Transportation (DOT) to report on its efforts to engage with local communities, metropolitan planning organizations, and regional transportation commissions on advancing SmartCity solutions in Nevada. These types of entities across Nevada are testing and investing in SmartCity solutions, such as sensors that detect pedestrians outside of a crosswalk or integrating vehicle-to-infrastructure technology that can tell a driver in their car when the traffic light will change.
* **Efforts to protect the Colorado River (Heller Amendment #3517):** This would increase funding for the Colorado River Salinity Control Program by $2 million. The Salinity Control Program seeks to protect water quality in the Colorado River, which is the primary source of water for Southern Nevada.
* **Ensuring the safety of housing communities (Heller Amendment #3671):** Denies individuals who have been convicted of aggravated sexual assault, murder, human sex trafficking, or crimes related to child pornography the opportunity for federal housing assistance, or terminates their current benefits.
* [**Supporting low-income individuals with tax preparation (Heller Amendment #3405):**](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=707E6129-AF00-4D6C-A4F8-EB499F682668)Provides $20 million in funding for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program in fiscal year 2019 to help low-income individuals with their tax preparation.

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