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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** Megan Taylor |
| August 4, 2017 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller to VA: Fix Flawed Formula to Support Nevada’s Veterans
*Requests Answers from Shulkin Concerning Northern Nevada Veterans Home***

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today urged Department Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary David Shulkin to fulfill the department’s commitment to provide matching funds for the new State Veterans Home in Nevada, a nursing facility specifically for veterans who want to remain close to their family, friends, and neighbors. The 102,000 square foot facility will include 96 beds for veterans, their spouses, and Gold Star parents.

The new facility, which is expected to be completed in December 2018, is poised to have a large impact on the nearly 80,000 veterans currently residing in northern Nevada. As of now the only veterans’ home in the state is located in Boulder City, which is nearly 500 miles away for northern Nevada veterans and is at max capacity. Last month Heller [attended the groundbreaking ceremony](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=42F8A28A-8F81-4D85-93DB-26DA3DCAC631) in Sparks, Nevada. The highly-anticipated complex will house a physical therapy center, dining hall, chapel, activity center, and more.

“I agree that the current formula utilized should prioritize safety above all projects; however, I do have concerns that when constructing new state homes, certain critical factors are not being taken into consideration—namely the needs and challenges of large, rural states,” **Heller wrote in a letter**. “For veterans in northern parts of Nevada, like Reno, Sparks, and Carson City, it is unreasonable to expect these veterans to move 500 miles away from home to access the State Veterans Home in Boulder City…Plain and simple, the current formula does not take into account this geographical challenge, putting Nevada’s veterans at an unfair disadvantage. Our veterans do not deserve to bear this significant hardship just to have access to a benefit they have earned.”

Heller, who serves as a senior member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, previously requested information from Secretary Shulkin regarding the State Construction Home Grant Program and expressed his concerns about the delay in federal funding to construct the new facility. Because the VA has yet to allocate the funds it is responsible for under the program, the state has been forced to put forth the full funds to begin construction. Heller also [wrote the previous VA Secretary last year on the same issue](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/26ca54ba-a1fb-40d7-aafd-b96ac72564ae/07142016%20Heller%20Letter%20to%20VA%20re%20State%20Home%20Grant%20Funding.pdf), but did not receive an update on his request. Last month, [Heller held roundtables with veterans in Reno and Las Vegas to discuss critical issues facing Nevada’s veterans](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/7/heller-holds-veteran-roundtables-focused-on-solutions-for-nevada-veterans), including the Northern Nevada Veterans Home. VA officials, as well as members of Heller’s Veterans Advisory Councils, attended the roundtables.
 **The letter reads in full**:

*The Honorable David J. Shulkin*

*Secretary of Veterans Affairs*

*U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*

*810 Vermont Avenue Northwest*

*Washington, DC 20420*

*Dear Secretary Shulkin,*

*As a senior member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, I write to you today to follow up on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) State Construction Home Grant Program.  This program is critical to Nevada given the state recently began construction of a much-needed State Veterans Home in the north, and I appreciate your attention to my concerns with the current formula for the grant program.*

*For years, Nevada has been working toward building a second state veterans home in northern Nevada to ensure this community has access to a facility close to home.  I was proud to attend the recent groundbreaking for this facility and have been a strong supporter of this important effort because the Boulder City State Veterans Home is 500 miles away from northern Nevada and is at capacity in the 180-bed facility.  The Nevada Department of Veterans Services understands the urgency of getting this home built, but unfortunately, the VA’s matching funds for the project have yet to come through.  As a result, Nevada has put forth the full funds to begin construction; however, this in no way means that Nevada should face continued delays in receiving its matching funds from the VA due to a priority list that does not take into account the needs of large and rural states.*

*I previously reached out to the former VA Secretary on the formula used to determine how funds are allocated using the priority list, and my office has continually engaged with your staff at the VA Central Office.  I agree that the current formula utilized should prioritize safety above all projects; however, I do have concerns that when constructing new state homes, certain critical factors are not being taken into consideration—namely the needs and challenges of large, rural states.  For veterans in northern parts of Nevada, like Reno, Sparks, and Carson City, it is unreasonable to expect these veterans to move 500 miles away from home to access the State Veterans Home in Boulder City, especially for those with family nearby or those who have lived there for decades.  Plain and simple, the current formula does not take into account this geographical challenge, putting Nevada’s veterans at an unfair disadvantage.  Our veterans do not deserve to bear this significant hardship just to have access to a benefit they have earned.*

*That is why I respectfully request that the VA incorporate this consideration into its formula.  Furthermore, I request an update since my correspondence last year on what actions the VA has taken or will take to develop changes to the formula that recognize the needs of rural and large states like Nevada.*

*As always, thank you for your attention to this matter, and I respectfully request a reply by August 18, 2017.  I look forward to continuing our work together to assist our nation’s veterans.*

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