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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** Megan Taylor |
| January 30, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller to VA: Help Nevada’s Homeless Veterans Get Jobs, Succeed in STEM Careers**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today urged the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to help fight Nevada’s veteran homelessness problem by encouraging veterans to gain employment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers.

Heller, a senior member of the U.S. Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee and staunch advocate of ending veteran homelessness, [sent a letter to VA Secretary David J. Shulkin](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/a5b2aba9-55ff-461d-b303-38fb4aecbfa0/01302018%20Letter%20to%20Shulkin%20re%20Homeless%20Veterans%20and%20STEM%20Programs.pdf) requesting the department evaluate ways it could steer homeless veterans into STEM careers. Heller noted that in his home state of Nevada there is a high demand for STEM skills as the state continues to experience an influx of innovative industries such as drones, autonomous and electric vehicles, and other technology companies.

“As you well know, Nevada continues to face the challenge of combatting veteran homelessness, with hundreds of veterans still living in shelters or on the street,” **wrote Heller.** “While I have been proud to support funding to provide resources to homeless veterans, including the recent $16 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to Nevada organizations, all of us can do more to help these heroes get back on their feet. One of the keys to ensuring veterans’ success is through stable and quality employment opportunities. That is why I encourage you to evaluate the VA’s homeless veteran employment programs for opportunities to place veterans in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers.”

As a senior member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, one of Heller’s top priorities in Congress is supporting Nevada’s 300,000 military veterans. Last year, [President Trump signed into law eight veterans’ bills](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=45CA3448-AC0D-42D6-A7FC-828F5DCBC6E5) Heller either authored or helped introduce and move over the finish line.

Heller has been a long-time champion of fighting veteran homelessness. In early 2017, Heller introduced the Creating a Reliable Environment (CARE) for Veterans’ Dependents Act, bipartisan legislation to ensure that children of homeless veterans are eligible for services provided to that veteran by VA-funded facilities. In May 2017, [Heller spoke at a Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs](https://youtu.be/5l0YTSIvfeU) hearing about the legislation. In 2012, he authored the Women’s Homeless Veterans Act, a bill to provide shelters and short-term housing to women who become homeless after serving in the military.

Heller also joined several of his colleagues in [advocating for three critical programs to help homeless veterans across the country](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/5/heller-bipartisan-group-of-senators-defend-programs-to-help-homeless-veterans): Supporting Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program, the GDP Program, and services provided by the Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program.

**The** [**letter**](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/a5b2aba9-55ff-461d-b303-38fb4aecbfa0/01302018%20Letter%20to%20Shulkin%20re%20Homeless%20Veterans%20and%20STEM%20Programs.pdf) **reads in full:**

January 30, 2018

The Honorable David J. Shulkin

Secretary

United States Department of Veterans Affairs

810 Vermont Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin,

As a senior member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, I write to you today regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employment programs for homeless veterans and connecting veterans with opportunities related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).  In a state where STEM skills are in high demand, the VA has an opportunity to ensure Nevada and our nation’s veterans are put on a successful path with a good-paying job.

As you well know, Nevada continues to face the challenge of combatting veteran homelessness, with hundreds of veterans still living in shelters or on the street.  While I have been proud to support funding to provide resources to homeless veterans, including the recent $16 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to Nevada organizations, all of us can do more to help these heroes get back on their feet.  One of the keys to ensuring veterans’ success is through stable and quality employment opportunities. That is why I encourage you to evaluate the VA’s homeless veteran employment programs for opportunities to place veterans in STEM careers.

The demand for STEM skills is growing nationwide, but especially in Nevada where there is an influx of innovative industries such as drones, autonomous and electric vehicles, and other technology companies.  For many of these companies, veterans have existing skills and disciplines that make them excellent candidates for jobs that require STEM skills or apprenticeships.  The VA’s homeless veteran employment programs, such as the Homeless Veteran Community Employment Services (HVCES), should find ways to steer veterans into these careers that will benefit them long-term, provide stability, and bring them out of homelessness permanently.  I respectfully request answers to the following questions related to this issue:

1.      Are homeless veteran employment programs working to place homeless veterans in STEM fields? If so, please provide examples where this has been a success.

2.      Are VA facilities, including in Reno and Las Vegas, working in coordination with the community and local companies to determine if there are opportunities for homeless veterans or veterans at-risk of homelessness to be employed in STEM careers?

3.      Does the VA have any existing apprenticeship, educational, or other training programs to ensure homeless veterans or veterans at-risk of homelessness can gain skills needed for STEM careers?

Caring for our veterans when they are in need is one of our nation’s most sacred duties, and one of our highest responsibilities in Congress. I appreciate your partnership in ensuring our veterans have every opportunity to thrive here at home and regain their independence.  I request a response by no later than February 13, 2018.

      Sincerely,

                                                                  DEAN HELLER

                                                                  U.S. Senator

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