|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/74/US-Senate-UnofficialAltGreatSeal.svg/2000px-US-Senate-UnofficialAltGreatSeal.svg.png

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contacts:**  |
| April 5, 2017 | Megan Taylor 202-224-6244 (Heller)  |
|  |  |

**Heller, Bipartisan Coalition of Senators Renew Legislation to Combat Sexual Assault on College & University Campuses***Group of Republican and Democratic Senators reintroduce*Campus Accountability and Safety Act *to prevent sexual assault on college campuses, protect survivors, and provide accountability and transparency for institutions* **Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) and a bipartisan coalition of Senators today renewed the Campus Accountability and Safety Act—legislation to combat sexual assault on college and university campuses by protecting students, promoting equity, and strengthening accountability and transparency for institutions.  The bill was reintroduced today by U.S. Senators Claire McCaskill of Missouri, Kirsten Gillbrand of New York, Dean Heller of Nevada, Mark Warner of Virginia, Marco Rubio of Florida, Chuck Grassley of Iowa, Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, and Joni Ernst of Iowa.  The Senators’ legislation would reform the way colleges and universities address and report incidents of sexual assault that occur on their campuses, and safeguards both survivors and accused students. It incorporates feedback from key stakeholders to strengthen how student surveys are conducted, as well as strengthens newly required training standards. The bill sets new notification requirements for both survivors and accused students involved in the campus disciplinary process. *Key provisions of the legislation include:** **Establishes New Campus Resources and Support Services for Student Survivors:** Colleges and universities will be required to designate Sexual Assault Response Coordinators to assist survivors of sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. Sexual Assault Response Coordinators will coordinate support services and accommodations for survivors, provide information about options for reporting, and provide guidance or assistance—at the direction of the survivor—in reporting the crime to campus authorities and/or law enforcement. Schools will no longer be allowed to sanction students who report sexual violence but reveal a non-violent student conduct violation in good faith, like underage drinking.
* **Requires Fairness in Campus Disciplinary Process:** All schools will now be required to use one uniform process for campus student disciplinary proceedings and may no longer allow athletic departments or other subgroups to handle complaints. Schools must now provide written notification to the accused as well as the victim of any decision to move forward with a campus disciplinary proceeding within 24 hours of that decision. The notice must include details of the complaint, a summary of the disciplinary proceeding, and the rights and due process protections available to both parties.
* **Ensures Minimum Training Standards for On-Campus Personnel:** This legislation ensures that everyone from the Sexual Assault Response Coordinators to those responsible for investigating and participating in disciplinary proceedings will receive specialized training so that they have a firm understanding of the nature of these crimes and their effect on survivors.
* **Creates New Transparency Requirements:** For the first time, students at every college and university in America will be surveyed about their experience with sexual violence to get an accurate picture of this problem.  This new biennial survey will be standardized and confidential, with the results published online so that parents and high school students can make an informed choice when comparing universities. The Department of Education will also be required to publish the names of all schools with pending investigations, final resolutions, and voluntary resolution agreements related to sexual violence.
* **Campus Accountability and Coordination with Law Enforcement:** This legislation will require colleges and universities to enter into memoranda of understanding with each local law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction to report to a campus as a first responder to clearly delineate responsibilities and share information so that when a crime occurs, both campus authorities and local authorities can focus on solving the crime rather than debating jurisdiction.
* **Stiffer Penalties for Clery Act Violations:** Schools that do not comply with certain requirements under the bill may face a penalty of up to 1 percent of the institution’s operating budget. The bill also increases penalties for Clery Act violations up to $150,000 per violation from the current penalty of $35,000. Financial penalties collected from universities in violation will be distributed back to campuses through a new competitive grant program, administrated by the Secretary of Education, for which colleges and universities can apply for the purpose of researching best practices for preventing and responding to sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking on college campuses and sharing such research with peer institutions and the Department of Education.

 “Democrats and Republicans may not agree on much, but protecting our kids and students is something that cuts across every political divide, straight to who we are as people,” **McCaskill said.** “I’m really proud to work with this group of colleagues on smart policy to do just that—protect and empower our students, hold perpetrators of this heinous crime accountable, and make our schools more responsive—because combating sexual assault and instilling respect and empowerment in our kids is a value all of us share.” “Sexual assault is pervasive and far too often colleges and universities would rather sweep it under the rug, but we can no longer turn a blind eye to this problem. This bipartisan bill would flip the incentives so that schools are finally held accountable. It would also help protect students and establish new resources for student survivors. Our bipartisan coalition will keep working together to pass this bill, change the status quo, and make our campuses safer,” said Gillibrand. “As a father and grandfather, I want to ensure that all students feel safe on their college campus, **said Heller**. “In addition to providing victims with the support and resources they need, our legislation establishes safeguards to help schools further protect their students from the threat of sexual assault. I’m proud to work with my colleagues on this bipartisan legislation, and I’m hopeful others will join us in supporting it.”“Sexual assault on college campuses is a crime that too often goes unpunished,” **Rubio said.** “We must hold colleges and universities accountable for ensuring the safety and well-being of their students. This legislation will protect and empower survivors, reform the way institutions handle sexual assault cases, and ultimately help ensure these cases are handled in the criminal justice system as the serious crimes that they are. I’m proud to be a part of a bipartisan coalition that is aiming to make our college campuses safer.”“Sexual assault is a crime, period. That’s true whether it occurs on or off a college campus. Our bill has provisions to ensure that colleges treat sexual assault cases with the seriousness they deserve,” **Grassley said**. “This includes better coordination with law enforcement and clearer expectations for how colleges should handle reports of sexual assault. Like with any crime, weak enforcement makes the problem worse. This bill will start to turn that around.”“By ensuring colleges treat sexual assault with the seriousness it deserves, this bipartisan legislation aims to change campus culture and stop the staggeringly prevalent scourge of sexual assault,” Blumenthal said. “College administrators can no longer dismiss, demean, or deny the problem. This bill’s message is clear: the days of victim blaming are over and the days of accountability are here.”“Sexual assault of any kind must be met with zero tolerance from our society – including on our college campuses,” said Ernst. “We must ensure that student survivors of sexual assault have the support and resources they need to feel empowered to come forward. Additionally, those responsible for such heinous crimes on college campuses across the country must be held accountable. I’m proud to be a part of this bipartisan effort to protect young students and take steps to try to change the unacceptable culture surrounding sexual assault.”###http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_fb.png http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_tw.png http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_yt.png |