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**Heller, Murray Introduce Bill to Strengthen Health Care for Women Veterans****Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Patty Murray (D-WA), senior members of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, today introduced the Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act, legislation aimed at enhancing the quality of care women veterans receive from Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals around the country by improving facilities, holding the VA accountable, guaranteeing privacy and safety, and increasing coordination with state veteran agencies.   Today, nearly 2.3 million women are veterans of military service, and that number is expected to rise as women currently comprise 15 percent of the U.S. military’s active duty personnel and 18 percent of the Guard and Reserve forces.   The Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act requires the VA to establish standards to ensure VA health care facilities meet the specific needs of women veterans and integrate these standards into prioritization for construction projects. It also demands accountability from the VA by instituting a performance measure to analyze women’s health outcomes and requires the VA to strengthen its policies to guarantee women’s privacy and safety. Additionally, it requires every VA medical center to have at least one full-time obstetrician or gynecologist and directs the VA to conduct a pilot program to increase residency and graduate medical education positions for these positions at VA facilities. Lastly, the bill requires increased collaboration with state veterans agencies and requires the VA to examine wait times for women veterans.  “As the women veteran population increases and the demographics of the military continue to evolve, it’s important that the VA adapt to the specific needs of women veterans in order to provide the best care possible to them,” **said Heller**. “This commonsense, bipartisan legislation aims to do just that by expanding medical services at VA hospitals and access to gender-specific care, strengthening privacy and protection measures, and implementing accountability standards in order to ensure women’s health care needs are met. I urge my colleagues to join Senator Murray and me in supporting a much-needed update to the VA that would improve the quality of care female veterans have earned and deserve.”“Women are stepping up in greater numbers than ever before to serve our country, and we need to get to work now to make sure VA is prepared to give them the care they earned in their service,” **said Murray**. “Improving VA facilities, expanding care, and ensuring privacy and safety for female veterans – the fastest growing population of veterans-- is essential to fulfilling our country’s promise to better care for all veterans who have sacrificed so much on our behalf.”Nevada is home to over 300,000 veterans, and Senator Heller has consistently used his senior role on the Veterans Affairs’ Committee to bring both parties together in order to achieve results for Nevada’s veterans. In 2015, Heller [requested](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/d56885a0-667e-4831-a264-268e7d4ea76d/Letter%20to%20Vets%20Committee%20re%20Women%20Vets%20Hearing%202.27.15.pdf) a hearing on the VA’s progress in offering gender-specific care to veterans and [emphasized the importance of women’s health clinics](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/videos?ID=341E746B-060B-4D43-A9C9-4422E66C8171) at VA hospitals. He also [discussed](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9MBSvpxIu0) the needs of Nevada’s women veterans with a member of the Nevada Women Veterans Advisory Committee, Dr. Anne Davis, during a Veterans’ Affairs Committee hearing. In 2015, Heller [secured passage](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=37BD7C42-FDB3-4EB6-BACC-9AFC1E260F90) of an amendment (SA #456 to S.ConRes.11) to ensure VA medical facilities properly meet the needs of women veterans by taking into account their safety and privacy. In 2016, Heller introduced the [Ensuring Women Veterans Access to Care,](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=B9B43D4E-EBED-4820-81EC-4565E95D50A3) an amendment to the 2016 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act to ensure every VA medical facility has a full-time gynecologist to meet women’s health needs.###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 |