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| May 19, 2017 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller, Warner Reintroduce Legislation to Expedite Searches for Missing Persons**

**Washington, D.C.** - U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Mark Warner (D-VA) reintroduced the Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act, legislation that allows Good Samaritans, or eligible search and recovery organizations, expedited access to certain public lands so that they may conduct searches for missing persons. Currently, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, the federal agencies that have jurisdiction over public lands, must grant permits to Good Samaritan organizations who apply to conduct search missions on public lands. In several cases, the permitting process has taken as long as a year.

Heller initially introduced the legislation during the 113th Congress following the discovery of the bodies of Keith Goldberg and Air Force Staff Sergeant Antonio Tucker in the Lake Mead Recreation Area by Good Samaritan search and rescue teams. In both cases, the volunteer search teams had to wait nearly one year to obtain the proper permits and insurance before conducting their searches.

Sen. Warner’s involvement was prompted by the experience of Jodi Goldberg of Alexandria, whose brother, Keith, was killed and whose body was left at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area near Las Vegas, Nevada in 2012. His family worked for 10 months to get the permits and secure a one million-dollar liability insurance policy required by the National Park Service before it would allow a trained volunteer search and recovery team to search for his body in the national park.

The Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act accelerates the Good Samaritan permit approval process by requiring the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture to issue permits to search and rescue groups for their recovery missions within 48 hours of application. The legislation also waives the federal government from liability and does not require Good Samaritans to purchase liability insurance as a condition of approval. Additionally, the legislation requires the federal agencies to develop a plan to establish partnerships with search and recovery organizations in order to better coordinate search missions.

“When a loved one goes missing, the last thing any family would expect is the obstacle of the federal government’s bureaucracy and the roadblock it creates to finding a missing person,” **said Heller.** “It should not take more than 48 hours for eligible, ready, and willing search and rescue teams to obtain a permit to conduct a recovery mission, and my bill makes sure of it. The Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act is a commonsense bill that highlights the need for an all-hands-on-deck approach to either uniting missing individuals with their families or providing the closure that so many families need.”

“It is unacceptable that roadblocks and red tape prevent trained searchers from volunteering their time to find missing loved ones for grieving families in need of closure,” **said Warner.** “Good Samaritan groups should have access to our public lands as quickly as possible. Families shouldn’t have to go months wondering what happened to their missing loved ones."

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