

**For Immediate Release:** Contact: Neal A. Patel

March 24, 2015 202-224-6244

**Heller Highlights Plight of Rural Veterans to Receive VA Care**

**(Washington, DC)** – Today, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) spoke at the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs titled, “The Veterans Choice Act – Exploring the Distance Criteria.” Heller’s remarks focused on the long distance veterans living in rural Nevada must travel to receive certain types of care from the VA.

**Click here to watch video.**

**Background**

***What is the “40-mile rule”?*** When Congress passed the Veterans Choice Act last year, the bill specified that veterans who live more than 40 miles away from a VA facility can seek private care in their local community.

***How is the VA interpreting this rule?*** Members are concerned about two aspects of the VA’s interpretation:

1. The distance of “40-miles” is considered “as the crow flies,” instead of 40-miles driving distance.
2. Veterans who have a VA clinic in their community are not eligible to receive private care under the 40-mile rule even if that VA clinic does not offer the care or services the veteran is seeking.

***How is this interpretation specifically impacting Nevada’s veterans?*** For instance, Elko veterans have a VA clinic, but it only provides primary care and telehealth services. So any veteran needing specialty care will have to travel 6 hours roundtrip to Salt Lake City to receive this care instead of being allowed to obtain private care in the community. The same issue applies to veterans with VA clinics in Gardnerville, Pahrump, Ely, Fallon, and Laughlin.

###