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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Neal A. Patel](mailto:neal_patel@heller.senate.gov) | | June 9, 2016 | 202-224-6244 |   **Heller, Tester Introduce Bill to Improve Veterans’ Experience with Health Care**  **(Washington, DC)** – Recently, U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Jon Tester (D-MT) teamed up to introduce bipartisan legislation honoring our veterans by helping improve the quality of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care. The legislation requires the VA to carry out a pilot program for the contract hiring of medical scribes so that physicians can spend more time with their veteran patients and improve the quality of every VA health care appointment. Both senators issued the following statements:  “During my veteran and military roundtables in Nevada, I have heard from veterans about what they need from their doctors: quick appointment scheduling and more time with their physician. With doctor shortages already straining the time a physician can spend with each veteran, medical scribes will, give VA physicians more time with the patient and less time dealing with bureaucracy. Nevada and our nation’s veterans selflessly placed their lives on the line, and we owe them quality care in return. As members of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, improving VA care has always been a priority for me and Senator Tester, which is why I am proud to join with him in introducing this bipartisan legislation honoring our heroes with greater access to quality VA health care,” said **Senator Dean Heller**.  “Improving the quality of health care our veterans receive is an essential part of fulfilling our promise to those who served,” **Senator Jon Tester said.** “This legislation will provide helpful administrative assistance to ensure VA doctors spend more time directly helping veterans and not filling out paperwork.”  **BACKGROUND:**  **Issue:** Veterans are experiencing long appointment wait times and less time with their VA doctor for a variety of reasons, but in part due to high patient load and not enough doctors to serve the population. This shortage is a nationwide problem, but in particular it impacts the VA because there are fewer recruitment and retention tools available to the VA compared to the private sector.    **Legislative Solution:** Require the VA to carry out an 18-month pilot program in up to five VA medical centers for the contract hiring of medical scribes to assist VA physicians with workload. This bill ensures doctors have more time to see veteran patients rather than enter medical data.  It will also serve as a recruitment tool for doctors who want an employment package comparable to the private sector.  **What is a medical scribe?** A medical scribe is an individual trained and hired to enter information into the electronic health record or chart at the direction of a physician or practitioner. A scribe can be found in multiple settings, including physician practices, hospitals, emergency departments, long-term care facilities, long-term acute care hospitals, public health clinics, and ambulatory care centers.    **Benefits of Medical Scribes:**  ·       Reduces the amount of time a physician must capture and enter data during a patient’s visit and increases the time they have to see patients, which can improve both quality of care and timeliness of care.  ·       Physicians often request scribes as part of their employment package, so the use of scribes can serve as a VA recruitment and retention tool in a system that struggles greatly with this issue due to the competitive advantage of the private sector.  ·       Improves the quality of electronic health records because scribes can devote the time to detailed documentation.  ###  [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_fb.png](http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Senator-Dean-Heller/325751330177) [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_tw.png](http://twitter.com/SenDeanHeller) [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_yt.png](http://www.youtube.com/user/SenDeanHeller) |