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**In Case You Missed It: Heller Fighting for Nevada’s Veterans**

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### [Standing up for Nevada’s veterans](http://elkodaily.com/news/opinion/commentary/commentary-standing-up-for-nevada-s-veterans/article_0540aedb-30a5-5509-9852-525227c0e997.html)

Elko Daily Free Press

Senator Dean Heller

As a senior member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs and representative of more than 300,000 veterans living in Nevada, I am always working to address the problems that continue to plague one of our country’s largest government agencies — the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 2014, the Washington Times reported that VA employees intentionally manipulated data to hide excessive wait times for scheduled appointments. The VA scandal that rocked our country hit too close to home — veterans seeking care at a VA facility in Las Vegas had to wait more than six hours in the emergency room to receive medical care. At the time, Americans waited an average of 26 minutes in the emergency room at local hospitals to be treated.

It’s outrageous and unacceptable that any veteran would have to wait that long to receive the medical care they expect and deserve, and we will not tolerate it. In response, Congress passed legislation to make sure veterans receive more timely care.

While the VA has made improvements, we still have much work ahead of us to ensure that the VA is accountable to the very people it was designed to serve — our nation’s heroes.

It’s why I helped introduce the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, bipartisan legislation that President Trump recently signed into law. The bill demands accountability by providing the VA the tools it needs to fire employees who aren’t doing their jobs and protect whistleblowers for exposing bad actors. Whistleblowers, like the VA scheduling clerk in Texas who shed light on the data manipulation, deserve protections — not punishment — because they’re standing up for the veterans they work for.

Do not get me wrong; in recent years, the VA has taken steps to improve transparency and care delivery, but the bottom line is that bad employees need to be fired, not placed on administrative leave with pay.

Moreover, the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act empowers VA employees and will lead to better care for Nevada’s veterans. The legislation incentivizes management to protect whistleblowers and address misconduct by their employees; prohibits bonuses to employees guilty of wrongdoing, and revokes relocation benefits for employees who abuse the system.

I applaud the President for signing our important bill to bring more accountability to the VA into law. If you’re not doing your job, then you shouldn’t be paid, and that will now apply to VA employees who let our veterans and our country down.

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This commonsense legislation is the product of strong bipartisanship in Congress, and it serves as an example of how we can work together to do more to help our veterans and all Americans.

Nevada’s veterans continue to face challenges when it comes to the VA, and that’s why I work closely with my Veterans Advisory Councils, one in the north and one in the south, to identify problems at the local level and solutions to fix them. I believe that feedback from Nevada veterans is essential in this process, and I am always looking for an opportunity to hear their concerns directly.

I will continue to use my role on the U.S. Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee to advance legislation like the Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, and I will continue working to see that we do everything we can to ensure Nevada’s veterans receive the timely care and help they deserve.

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