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**Peters-Heller Bill to Support Domestic Violence Survivors Advances in U.S. Senate**

**WASHINGTON**– Bipartisan legislation introduced by U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Gary Peters (D-MI) to help protect domestic violence survivors and their pets advanced in the U.S. Senate today. The bipartisan [Pet and Women Safety (PAWS) Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/2/heller-peters-introduce-the-pet-and-women-safety-act) protects survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence from emotional and psychological trauma caused by violence against their pets. The legislation passed the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry as part of broader agriculture legislation.

Studies have shown that domestic abusers often seek to manipulate or intimidate their survivors through threatening or harming their pets. However, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), only three percent of domestic violence shelters across the country accept pets. The *PAWS Act* expands the federal criminal code to threats or acts of violence against a victim’s pet, while providing funding through grants to programs that offer shelter and housing assistance to domestic violence survivors with pets. The bill also requires the full amount of the victim's losses for purposes of restitution in domestic violence and stalking offenses to include any costs incurred for veterinary services relating to physical care for the victim's pet.

“As a strong supporter and author of legislation to provide survivors of domestic violence the critical services they need, I welcome the Senate Agriculture Committee’s passage of the PAWS Act today,” **said Senator Heller.** “I was proud to work with my colleague Senator Gary Peters and several advocacy groups in dedicated to fighting domestic abuse to introduce this legislation, which ensures that victims are not forced to choose between their personal safety and the safety of their pet. I am grateful to Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow for working with me to include this important legislation in the farm bill.”

Nevada has facilities in both Reno and Las Vegas that serve victims of domestic violence, their children, and their pets. Last year, [Heller attended the groundbreaking of Noah’s Animal House (NAH)](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/7/heller-attends-animal-shelter-groundbreaking-in-reno), a full service pet shelter to assist animals from homes experiencing domestic violence, in Reno, NV.

“Many survivors of domestic violence are afraid to leave an abusive situation out of concern for what could happen to their pets, who are often considered members of the family,” **said Senator Peters.** “This bipartisan legislation would help create more safe havens so domestic violence survivors and their pets can escape an abuser and find a fresh start, and I will be working to ensure this bill is passed by the full Senate.”

The PAWS Act is supported by the National Network to End Domestic Violence, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), the Humane Society of the United States, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, the National Link Coalition, the Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T) Program, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, the Animal Welfare Institute, RedRover, the National Animal Care & Control Association, the National District Attorneys Association, the American Veterinary Medical Association, YWCA USA, the American Kennel Club, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the National Sheriffs’ Association.

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