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**President Signs Into Law Heller-Backed Bill to Prosecute the Rape Kit Backlog, Resolve Cold Cases, Deliver Justice for Victims**

**WASHINGTON –** President Trump has signed into law the [Justice Served Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/1/heller-cosponsors-bill-to-help-prosecute-sex-offenders-rapists-and-other-criminals-in-dna-cold-cases), bipartisan legislation introduced by U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV), John Cornyn (R-TX) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) to provide justice to victims of violent crimes by providing funding to prosecute the rape kit backlog, resolve cold cases, and help exonerate those who were wrongfully convicted.

Specifically, the Justice Served Act authorizes federal funding under the Debbie Smith Act, which created the primary *program* to end the backlog of untested and unanalyzed DNA by dedicating much-needed resources to state and local law enforcement agencies to conduct forensic analyses of crime scenes, including untested rape kits. [Heller is a co-author of the Debbie Smith Crime Victims Protection Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/3/heller-cornyn-feinstein-klobuchar-introduce-the-debbie-smith-crime-victims-protection-act), legislation to continue the program’s testing of cold case DNA evidence and ensure that Nevada receives critical funding to help reduce the backlog of DNA evidence.

In August, [Heller visited the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office Forensic Science Division](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=CC6B242D-46DB-47E5-89AB-4AE43CD419EE), which provides forensic services for 13 of the state’s 17 counties and has received funding through the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program for many years. According to a [report](https://mynews4.com/news/local/83-percent-of-backlogged-sexual-assault-kits-in-nevada-tested-resulting-in-12-arrests) from earlier this year, 6,367 of the Nevada kits had been sent to labs for testing, while 4,871 had actually completed the testing process, or 63 percent of the total untested backlogged kits. Out of those kits that completed the testing process, the DNA has hit a match in 466 of the cases. At least 12 arrests have been made in Nevada as a result.

“I am encouraged that the President has signed into law our bipartisan Justice Served Act to help provide victims of atrocious crimes justice that is long overdue,” **said Senator Heller**. “It is estimated that there are hundreds of thousands of untested rape kits sitting in law enforcement and crime lab storage facilities across the nation. Each one of these untested rape kits represents a missed opportunity to help bring justice and healing to a survivor of sexual assault. That is why it is critical that our law enforcement agencies are equipped with the federal resources and support that they need. Our legislation does just that by providing much-needed funding to solve cold cases as well as protect those who have been wrongfully convicted of crimes they didn’t commit. While this is a positive step forward, we still have more work to do. As a strong supporter of legislation that holds perpetrators accountable for their vile crimes and brings justice to victims, I’m committed to doing everything that I can to support efforts at the local, state and federal level to combat Nevada’s backlog.”

Heller has championed several policies and fought for federal funding to combat the state’s rape kit backlog, including programs to support lab operations for DNA analysis, and implement an evidence based program to audit, track, and report untested sexual assault kits. Additionally, earlier this year, [President Trump signed into law a bipartisan bill Heller introduced](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=22188F0C-BA3C-40AC-B54A-4F03E5F45374)called the [Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Reporting (SAFER) Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AC843F36-1234-4CB6-BC03-173239BDD647)that reauthorizes, strengthens, and extends the SAFER program in an effort to reduce the nationwide rape kit backlog.

The Justice Served Act is endorsed by the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA), the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN), Debbie Smith, the Major County Sheriffs of America (MCSA), the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA), the Sergeants Benevolent Association (SBA), the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), and the National Association of Police Organizations.

**Background** **on Sen. Heller’s efforts to empower victims of crimes**:

* Heller co-authored the [Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Reporting (SAFER) Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AC843F36-1234-4CB6-BC03-173239BDD647), bipartisan legislation designed[to assist law enforcement in their efforts to reduce the nation’s rape kit backlog](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AC843F36-1234-4CB6-BC03-173239BDD647). It was signed into law on January 8, 2018.
* Heller authored the [HERO Improvements Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/9/heller-effort-to-empower-veterans-to-fight-human-trafficking-in-nevada-passes-senate), [legislation to help train disabled military veterans to fight cybercrime](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/9/heller-effort-to-empower-veterans-to-fight-human-trafficking-in-nevada-passes-senate). It unanimously passed the U.S. Senate as part of a larger anti-human trafficking proposal, the bipartisan Abolish Human Trafficking Act.
* Heller helped introduce the [Abolish Human Trafficking Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AF675B46-1126-41E8-A51B-E54C48674A8C), a bipartisan bill aimed at cracking down on the horrific crime of human trafficking. The legislation funds services for victims and law enforcement, increases penalties for perpetrators, and encourages stronger reporting to track human trafficking crimes.
* Heller co-authored the [Debbie Smith Crime Victims Protection Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/3/heller-cornyn-feinstein-klobuchar-introduce-the-debbie-smith-crime-victims-protection-act),legislation to reauthorize the Debbie Smith Actand dedicate much-needed resources to state and local law enforcement agencies to conduct forensic analyses of crime scenes, including untested rape kits.
* In 2015, he supported the landmark Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, signed into law by President Obama, which included [his amendment to ensure DHS personnel are prepared to better identify victims and perpetrators of human trafficking](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/4/heller-s-amendment-seeking-justice-for-victims-of-human-trafficking-passes-senate).
* Heller cosponsored the [Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA),](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=A85FBCCD-3D90-4E8E-BB33-AD616B276157) legislation that will help end online sex trafficking in [Nevada, which ranks 9th in the U.S. among reported human trafficking cases](https://humantraffickinghotline.org/states). [The president signed this legislation into law on April 9, 2018](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=A85FBCCD-3D90-4E8E-BB33-AD616B276157).
* Heller cosponsored the [Combating Human Trafficking in Commercial Vehicles Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AF675B46-1126-41E8-A51B-E54C48674A8C), legislation that requires the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation to designate an individual tasked with coordinating human trafficking prevention efforts within the federal agency and further increases support to educate commercial drivers on how to recognize and prevent human trafficking. [It was signed into law on January 4, 2018](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AF675B46-1126-41E8-A51B-E54C48674A8C).

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