Press Release:

U.S. Senator Dean Heller

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**Heller: This Vote is About Religious Freedom**

**(Washington, D.C.) –** U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) made the following statement on his vote in support of the Blunt Amendment - *The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act -* to protect religious freedom.

"Our economy continues to suffer and too many Nevadans are out of work. If you need any evidence as to why the American people are so frustrated with Washington, look no further than today. While the Senate has not had the time to pass a budget in three years, Democrats who control the Senate and set the agenda have plenty of time for soapboxing and political speeches. Congress needs to be talking about bolstering economic growth, finding solutions to rising gas prices, and creating jobs. Nevadans and the American people want Congress to solve problems-- not more of the same. Both sides should be ashamed we are not having this debate.

“However, the Senate is having a debate as to whether the federal government has the right to bully religious organizations. Let’s be clear, in no way would this amendment deny or interfere with a woman’s access to contraception. This is an absurd allegation. The debate today is about one thing and one thing only; whether the federal government can force religious organizations to provide a service that violates their faith. Supporters of the President’s healthcare law believe the federal government can oppress religious organizations, force individuals to buy a product they may not want, and put personal healthcare decisions in the government’s hands. This issue speaks directly to the intrusiveness of the President’s healthcare law - it is clear that this law was passed without regard to religious or individual freedom.  We can reform our healthcare system to provide affordable access and care, but placing the government in between doctors and patients does a great disservice to everyone.

“Americans deserve access to a responsive and affordable healthcare system. Access to care and skyrocketing insurance premiums continue to be challenges that we must solve. I have always believed that healthcare decisions should be made between a doctor and their patient, not by some Washington bureaucrat. Unfortunately, Washington is more concerned with instigating partisan fights than with delivering results,” said Senator Heller.

**Facts about the *The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act***

* The Blunt amendment does not modify state or federal laws that are now in effect. It only amends Title I of the President’s healthcare law, supplying the respect for religious beliefs and moral convictions that is already part of other federal health programs but is woefully missing from this law. And the mandated benefits lists of the President’s healthcare law have not yet gone into effect. **So it is impossible for the Blunt amendment to take away any coverage people have now.** Moreover, it only amends the President’s healthcare law, not any of the currently-enforced statutes that govern access to care.
* The Blunt amendment would ensure that healthcare stakeholders retain the right to provide, purchase, or enroll in health coverage that is consistent with their religious beliefs and moral convictions, without fear of being penalized or discriminated against under federal law.

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