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**Senate Committee Passes Heller** **Bill to Expedite Searches for Missing Persons**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today applauded the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for unanimously passing the [Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/5/heller-warner-reintroduce-legislation-to-expedite-searches-for-missing-persons), legislation Heller introduced to speed access to public lands so accredited volunteer search groups can conduct searches for missing persons.

Currently, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, the federal agencies that have jurisdiction over public lands, must grant permits to Good Samaritan organizations who apply to conduct search missions on public lands. In several cases, the permitting process has taken as long as a year.

The Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act accelerates the Good Samaritan permit approval process by requiring the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture to issue permits to search and rescue groups for their recovery missions within 48 hours of application. The legislation also waives the federal government from liability and does not require Good Samaritans to purchase liability insurance as a condition of approval. Additionally, the legislation requires the federal agencies to develop a plan to establish partnerships with search and recovery organizations in order to better coordinate search missions.

“No family should have to wait on the federal government when it comes to searching for a missing loved one on public lands. In these difficult situations time is of the essence for search and rescue teams. That’s why I’m pleased the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee approved my bill to speed up volunteers’ access to public lands so Good Samaritans can get right to work,” **said Heller.** “The Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act is a commonsense bill that highlights the need for an all-hands-on-deck approach to either uniting missing individuals with their families or providing the closure that so many families need. I look forward to working with my Senate colleagues to bring the Good Samaritan Search and Recovery Act to the floor and signed into law.”

Heller initially introduced the legislation during the 113th Congress following the discovery of the bodies of Keith Goldberg and Air Force Staff Sergeant Antonio Tucker in the Lake Mead Recreation Area by Good Samaritan search and rescue teams. In both cases, the volunteer search teams had to wait nearly one year to obtain the proper permits and insurance before conducting their searches.

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