|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **cid:image001.jpg@01D34CC1.CF649170**     |  |  | | --- | --- | | **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Megan Taylor](mailto:Megan_Taylor@heller.senate.gov) | | October 24, 2017 | 202-224-6244 | |

**Senate Passes Heller-Backed Bill to Fight Nationwide Rape Kit Backlog**

**Washington, D.C.** – The U.S. Senate unanimously passed the [Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Reporting (SAFER) Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=AC843F36-1234-4CB6-BC03-173239BDD647), a bill introduced by U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) along with Senators John Cornyn (R-TX), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Michael Bennet (D-CO). This bipartisan legislation reauthorizes, strengthens, and extends the SAFER program in an effort to reduce the nationwide rape kit backlog.

In addition to reauthorizing this program, the legislation would ensure pediatric forensic nurses are eligible for training, highlighting the need for pediatric sexual assault nurse examiners in responding to children suffering from abuse.

“Victims of sexual assault deserve swift justice and nothing less,” **said Heller.** “Senate passage of this bipartisan bill represents an important step toward helping Nevada law enforcement in their efforts to cut down on the backlog of untested rape kits and ensure critical evidence isn’t left collecting dust. I’m proud to partner with Senator Cornyn on this legislation and see it garner wide, bipartisan support. As a strong supporter and author of proposals to crack down on these horrific crimes and aid victims on a path to recovery and closure, I urge the U.S. House to pass this bill and send it to the President’s desk.”

“This bill will empower law enforcement to identify and test more backlogged rape kits, help take criminals off the streets, and deliver justice for survivors,” **said Cornyn.** “I applaud the Senate for coming together to get this legislation over the finish line, and I urge my colleagues in the House to advance it quickly.”

“The idea that we have evidence laying around in labs that we could be using to bring criminals to justice is unacceptable,” **said Klobuchar.** “Passing this bipartisan legislation in the Senate is an important step forward in providing more resources for our law enforcement."

“Law enforcement must have access to resources and training to process rape kits, so survivors of sexual violence receive the thorough and fair investigations they deserve,” **said Bennet.** “Colorado worked to end its backlog of rape kits in 2015 – a process that took two years and millions of dollars. The SAFER Act will help other states make the same progress and ensure justice is served. We applaud the SAFER Act’s passage in the Senate, and we encourage its speedy passage in the House.”

###