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**Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Advances Heller-Backed Legislation
*Efforts Reflect Heller’s Work On Reducing Claims***

**Washington, D.C** – Today, the U.S. Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee approved the Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, legislation introduced by U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Chairman of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, Jon Tester (D-MT), ranking member of the committee, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV), and others. The bill overhauls the current appeals process at the Department of Veterans Affairs. As the Co-Chair of the bipartisan [Senate VA Backlog Working Group](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=2daa6da5-8c7a-447d-951a-c03e9f1f11e9), Heller has long advocated for solutions to expedite the processing of veterans’ disability claims and ultimately reduce the VA claims backlog, which still hovers around 90,000 claims.

“We need to do more to ensure our nation’s heroes receive quality and timely care, and I am pleased to see the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee work on bipartisan solutions to do just that,” **said Heller**. “Our legislation will overhaul the current appeals process to give veterans options while also ensuring the VA has the resources and parameters to act. As a Co-Chair of the VA Backlog Working Group, I’ll continue to fight for solutions to the backlog of disability claims that continues to deny veterans and their families the care and peace of mind they deserve.”

The Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 creates three different options for a veteran who wishes to appeal their case. A veteran would be able to seek a higher-level review by a regional office on the same evidence, file a supplemental claim with a regional office with the ability to submit additional evidence, or appeal directly to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals with the possibility of a hearing or the ability to submit additional evidence.

This legislation will also institute safeguards to ensure the VA has a plan to address pending appeals, the authority to test facets of the new appeals system, and compare data between the new and old system to gauge its success in serving veterans, their families and their survivors.

Heller is a senior member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, and uses this role to advocate on behalf of Nevada’s 300,000 veterans. In the last Congress, Heller introduced the 21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act, legislation designed to address the current claims backlog by overhauling the claims process to withstand a surge in claims. [That bill was included in a larger veterans legislative package which was signed into law](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=971372BC-A7E5-468A-9C64-1ACD72EAB363https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=971372BC-A7E5-468A-9C64-1ACD72EAB363). [Heller also cosponsored the Express Repeals Act last Congress](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2016/2/heller-joins-fellow-senators-to-introduce-bill-to-fix-backlog-of-va-appeals), which would have created a Fully Developed Appeals program to allow veterans the option to fast-track their appeals claims.

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