|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Neal A. Patel](mailto:neal_patel@heller.senate.gov)/[Michawn Rich](mailto:michawn_rich@heller.senate.gov) | | November 11, 2015 | 202-224-6244 |   **Heller Issues Veterans Day Statement, Announces Senate Passage of VA Backlog Bill**    **(Washington, DC)**– Yesterday, U.S. Senator Dean Heller’s (R-NV) bipartisan [*21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act*](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/5/heller-casey-lead-va-backlog-working-group-in-release-of-new-report-legislation-to-address-claims-delay)(S. 1203) passed the U.S. Senate by unanimous consent. Background information on this important legislation can be found below this statement from Senator Heller recognizing Nevada’s heroes on Veterans Day:  “Today, we recognize the many brave men and women who sacrificed so much to defend our country’s principal values of freedom and democracy. This is an especially important day for our state, where one out of every 10 Nevadans is a veteran. These heroes bring our state values that cannot be earned anywhere else – a true understanding of comradery and support for one another and a work ethic that is unmatched by even the greatest of entrepreneurs,” said **Senator Dean Heller**. “Thank you to all veterans – including the nearly 300,000 that call Nevada home – for defending this country and preserving Americans’ liberties. Your commitment and sacrifice will not be forgotten.”  **Background:**  Senator Heller introduced the bipartisan [*21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act*](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/5/heller-casey-lead-va-backlog-working-group-in-release-of-new-report-legislation-to-address-claims-delay) earlier this year alongside Senator Bob Casey (D-PA). The legislation creates reforms at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to eliminate the disability claims backlog and improve the claims process.  Nevada veterans are waiting 160 days on average for their claims to be completed, and nearly 850 claims are backlogged. In May, Senators Heller and Casey released the [VA Backlog Working Group 2015 Report](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/24c2c880-205c-4eb7-9e90-b9bc4958ce4e/2015%20VA%20Backlog%20Report.pdf) in which the Working Group identifies the progress made on the claims backlog since 2014, which Working Group recommendations have been implemented by the VA and Congress, and what actions must be taken to fully transition the VA to a 21st century benefits delivery system.  The [*21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act*](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/5/heller-casey-lead-va-backlog-working-group-in-release-of-new-report-legislation-to-address-claims-delay)and the [VA Backlog Working Group 2015 Report](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/24c2c880-205c-4eb7-9e90-b9bc4958ce4e/2015%20VA%20Backlog%20Report.pdf) were endorsed by several Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), including [Veterans of Foreign Wars](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/2bc2af7c-8b0d-4c07-b972-d614abf2dfb4/114%20VA%20Backlog%20Support%20Letter%20-%20VFW.pdf) (VFW),  [American Legion](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/31e77c20-cff1-450c-9a95-305af123a43e/114%20VA%20Backlog%20Support%20Letter%20-%20American%20Legion.pdf), [Disabled American Veterans](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/506afb5b-5684-4cbb-9439-1474d6597006/114%20VA%20Backlog%20Support%20Letter%20-%20DAV.pdf) (DAV), [Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/665b0694-a963-45ad-91d1-fca4f978d07a/114%20VA%20Backlog%20Support%20Letter%20-%20IAVA.pdf) (IAVA), and the [Military Officers Association of America](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/02edc48a-52f8-4cbb-bffb-e6a170f8cf5e/114%20VA%20Backlog%20Support%20Letter%20-%20MOAA.pdf) (MOAA).  Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Pat Toomey (R-PA), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), David Vitter (R-LA), Jon Tester (D-MT), Susan Collins (R-ME), Thad Cochran (R-MS), and Christopher Coons (D-DE) have all cosponsored the [*21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act*](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/5/heller-casey-lead-va-backlog-working-group-in-release-of-new-report-legislation-to-address-claims-delay).  ###  [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_fb.png](http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Senator-Dean-Heller/325751330177) [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_tw.png](http://twitter.com/SenDeanHeller) [http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_yt.png](http://www.youtube.com/user/SenDeanHeller) |