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**Commerce Committee Advances** **FAA Reauthorization Bill with Heller-Backed Provisions**

*Legislation Includes Significant Wins For Nevada*

**Washington, D.C.** – The U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee advanced the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2017, bipartisan legislation that reauthorizes federal aviation programs through fiscal year 2021, including several important provisions U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) secured in the legislation. Heller’s proposals included in the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act will boost Nevada’s travel and tourism economy, help veterans find employment, and promote the state’s drone industry. The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee is expected to hold a hearing on the legislation in the near future.

The FAA Reauthorization Act includes Heller’s provisions that will promote the state’s already robust drone industry by extending the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) test sites, allowing for small UAS package delivery, and authorizing beyond line-of-sight operations at the test sites, including Nevada’s. Furthermore, Heller advocated for pro-tourism policies to increase the competitiveness of Nevada’s airports by allowing Reno-Tahoe International Airport to access resources for attracting new airline routes, as well as ensuring airports like McCarran International can use certain funds for developing multimodal systems to get travelers from the airport into the city. Earlier this month, Heller [outlined the importance of these proposals](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/0a10111e-f876-4129-a2ef-4c19eaedb983/06092017%20Heller%20Letter%20to%20Chairman%20Thune%20on%20FAA.pdf) to Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee Chairman John Thune (R-SD).

Additionally, the legislation includes [provisions Heller championed last Congress](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2016/4/heller-applauds-final-passage-of-faa-bill) that will encourage the FAA to consider veterans for UAS employment opportunities and give Nevada stakeholders like the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, the Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority, and the Elko Convention and Visitors Authority a seat at the table for future discussions regarding tourism and infrastructure at the FAA.

“The Senate Commerce Committee took an important step in advancing legislation that will benefit Nevada,” **said Heller**. “This legislation includes several provisions that will bolster our tourism economy, expand our state’s drone industry as well as help Nevada veterans find employment. I will continue to work in a bipartisan basis to help move this Federal Aviation Administrationreauthorization through the U.S. Senate.”

Recently, Heller spoke with Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Elaine Chao at a U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hearing about the FAA reauthorization legislation and [discussed how it can support Nevada’s designated UAS test site and better facilitate research and development of this cutting-edge technology](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=099B6127-9341-47AD-B5F1-B2A201796EF1).

**Heller legislative priorities included in the FAA Reauthorization Bill:**

         **UAS Test Site Extension and Authorizing Beyond Line-of-Sight Operations:** Since Nevada is one of the six UAS test site locations, it will drive drone-related technological research and economic growth statewide. Sec. 2122 include Senator Heller’s priorities to ensure the UAS [test sites](http://diversifynevada.com/key-industries/aerospace-defense/uav), including Nevada’s, are extended beyond 2019 and that the FAA engages the test sites in projects to test, research, and evaluate beyond line-of-sight operations.

         **Small UAS Package Delivery:** The Heller-Cantwell UAS carriage provision in Sec. 2136 directs the Department of Transportation (DOT) to establish a streamlined air carrier certification program tailored for unmanned aircraft systems carrying property, like packages.

         **Small Community Air Service Development (SCASD) Program Eligibility:** This programprovides small airports with additional resources to attract new airline routes; however, the law stipulates that only airports considered small hubs as of 1997 are eligible for the program. Sec. 3202 updates the law to ensure airports, like Reno-Tahoe International Airport, who are currently not eligible but are considered small hubs based off current air traffic can compete for these resources.

         **Veterans Employment at FAA:** Given the new career opportunities that the FAA may have in the field of UAS technology, Sec. 2138 requires the FAA to assess whether any of these new occupations can be applied to the FAA’s Veterans’ Employment Program.

         **Intermodal Access Projects for Airports:** Sec. 1402 ensures airports like Las Vegas McCarran Airport can use federal infrastructure dollars for construction of facilities that offer multiple modes of transportation (i.e. bus, rail, Uber, and taxis). This provision could improve tourist access and facilitate economic development opportunities in Nevada.

         **Tourism Stakeholders:** The Schatz-Heller Tourism Amendment adds tourism stakeholders, like the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, the Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority, and the Elko Convention and Visitors Authority, to the Future Aviation Infrastructure and Financing Study provision in the bill.

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