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| http://www.therepublicblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Congress-Seal.png   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **For Immediate Release:** | **Contacts:** | | February 26, 2016 | [Neal A. Patel](mailto:neal_patel@heller.senate.gov)/[Michawn Rich](mailto:michawn_rich@heller.senate.gov) (Heller) 202-224-6244 | |  | [Dave Kuntz](mailto:dave_kuntz@tester.senate.gov) (Tester) 202-224-8544 | |  | [Macey Sevcik](mailto:Macey.Sevcik@mail.house.gov) (Bilirakis) 202-225-5755 |   **Heller, Tester, Bilirakis Expand Travel Options for Disabled Veterans**  **(Washington, DC) –** U.S. Senators Dean Heller (R-NV) and Jon Tester (D-MT) joined Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL12) to introduce the *Disabled Veterans Access to Space-A Travel Act* (S.2596). The legislation allows disabled veterans with a permanent service-connected disability rated as 100 percent to travel aboard military aircraft under the Space-Available (Space-A) program. Following introduction, Heller, Tester, and Bilirakis offered these statements:    “America’s disabled veterans live daily with the cost of freedom, and our nation must never forget their honorable commitment and service. This legislation ensures that those who have returned home and sacrificed the most have access to space-available travel – a quality benefit that truly shows how thankful America is for their sacrifice. I am proud to advocate on behalf of those who served in our Armed Forces and am grateful for the work of my colleagues Senator Tester and Congressman Bilirakis on this critical legislation,” said **Senator Dean Heller.**  “This bipartisan bill honors the sacrifice of those who have served and recognizes the contribution these veterans have made to our nation.  Taking this step forward will improve the quality of life for these American heroes and help fulfil this country’s obligation to properly honor their service,” said **Senator Jon Tester.**  “I’m proud we have worked together on this legislation to help our true American heroes. Our veterans have bravely served our country, and this is a common sense bill to help us further honor the sacrifices of 100 percent service-disabled veterans. It would allow these heroes to be eligible for the Space-Available program at no additional cost to the Department of Defense. The Space-A program allows active duty service members, their families, retirees, and certain others to fill empty seats on DOD flights. While active duty members and their families will remain the primary beneficiaries of this program in order to assist them in their service, our bill will extend this benefit to our disabled veterans. I’m honored to continue my work to support all our nation's heroes,” said **Congressman Gus Bilirakis**.  **Background:**  Space-A travel is a means of travel by which retired members of the Armed forces are permitted to travel on military aircraft when there is extra space. When mission and cargo loads allow, there are often open seats for extra passengers. Several different groups can travel aboard military aircraft on a Space-A basis. Unfortunately, disabled veterans who have a service-connected permanent disability rated as 100 percent cannot travel on military flights unlessthey are military retirees. This bill would authorize veterans who have a service-connected, permanent disability rated as 100 percent to travel on Space-A at no additional cost to the Department of Defense and without aircraft modifications.  The *Disabled Veterans Access to Space-A Travel Act* has been endorsed by the National Federation of the Blind’s national and Nevada chapters. Both letters are attached to this release.  ### |