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**FAA Conference Agreement Includes 13 Heller Provisions***Legislation Includes Heller Amendments to Improve Air Travel for Disabled Individuals, Advance Nevada’s Drone Industry*

**WASHINGTON** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today announced that the final conference agreement for a five-year Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act includes 13 Heller-led priorities. This bipartisan legislation reauthorizes federal aviation programs through fiscal year 2023, and it includes a range of Heller’s proposals to improve air travel for disabled individuals, boost Nevada’s travel and tourism economy, promote aviation safety, help veterans find employment, and advance the state’s drone industry.

Specifically, the FAA Reauthorization Act includes Heller’s provisions that will promote the state’s already robust drone industry by improving use of the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) test sites, authorizing beyond line-of-sight operations at these sites, including Nevada’s, advancing certification for small UAS package delivery, and progressing implementation of unmanned traffic management (UTM) for safe drone deliveries. 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.

The legislation also 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.

 In addition to the provisions Heller secured in the underlying bill, Heller ensured inclusion of amendments [in a Committee markup last year](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=0FE74EA7-67A6-4FE0-BB89-3E7E72ADCD0E). These amendments will address better wheelchair assistance by airlines, strengthen a study on the feasibility for in-cabin restraint systems for disabled individuals, and ensure important stakeholders, like disabled veterans and wheelchair manufacturers, are included in an advisory committee on the air travel needs of passengers with disabilities. Furthermore, Heller secured the addition of provisions that ensure there are baby-changing tables in restrooms at large and medium airports across the country and that airplanes have medical emergency equipment to meet the needs of children and pregnant women.

“This five-year FAA reauthorization reflects the needs of some of Nevada’s top industries: aviation, tourism, and drones. Nevada is a leader in all these areas, and this legislation will ensure we remain one, especially when it comes to the development of cutting-edge technologies,” **said Heller**. “I was proud to champion several provisions, including measures that will make it easier and safer for disabled individuals and families to travel by air, bolster our tourism economy, expand our state’s drone industry, and help Nevada veterans find employment. From the beginning stages of drafting this legislation to the conference agreement today, I have fought to ensure that Nevada’s voice is heard, and I look forward to pushing this bill over the finish line and into law so Nevada’s top industries can continue to thrive.”

**Heller-Led Priorities Included in the FAA Conference Agreement**

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

**Improve Wheelchair Assistance for Disabled Individuals:**Inaccordance with the 2016 FAA Extension (Public Law 114-190), the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on the training policy of air carriers for persons with disabilities.  Disability complaints have doubled since 2009. In 2015, air carriers received 30,829 disability-related complaints, nearly half of which were “Failure to Provide Wheelchair Assistance” complaints.  Heller’s amendment would ensure that DOT provides input on best practices to improve wheelchair assistance.

**Improve the Study on In-Cabin Wheelchair Restraint Systems:**The underlying bill included an important provision on studying whether a wheelchair restraint system can be implemented. This study should expand the scope of expertise by including critical stakeholders who can act in an advisory role during this process, such as aircraft manufacturers who understand the configuration of a plane, wheelchair manufacturers who understand the design of the product, and disability advocates who understand the specific challenges when using a wheelchair.

**Improve Participation in the Advisory Committee on the Air Travel Needs of Passengers with Disabilities:**The underlying bill included an advisory committee on the air travel needs of passengers with disabilities. This advisory committee has specific membership and will report to DOT on disability-related access barriers. Heller’s amendment would add additional stakeholders to the membership, including aircraft manufacturers, wheelchair manufacturers, and National Veterans Organizations representing disabled veterans.

**Cortez-Masto/Heller on UAS Test Sites and Emergency Operations**: This amendment codified  the FAA’s use of the test sites so that sites like Nevada’s can continue conducting critical research and development that will inform FAA and other stakeholders on the future needs for integrating this technology and solidifies Nevada’s leadership in advancing the UAS industry. Further, the provision encourages the FAA to swiftly issue public guidance on waivers using UAS during emergency or disaster situations, such as wildfires, firefighting, and search and rescue.

**UAS Test Sites 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. This provision ensures the UAS [test sites](http://diversifynevada.com/key-industries/aerospace-defense/uav), including Nevada’s, are able to carry out projects to test, research, and evaluate beyond line-of-sight operations.

**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. This provision 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, this provision 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:** This provision 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.

**Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM) -**To ensure that drones can operate safely in the national airspace, unmanned traffic management (much like current air traffic management) will need to be implemented.  This provision would advance the process for the FAA to create certification for individual UTM systems by private entities. This will advance commercial drone operations like package delivery so they can be safety integrate into the national airspace.

**Baby Changing Tables at Airports –**Requires medium or large hub airports to maintain baby changing tables in one men's and one women's restroom in each passenger terminal building.

**Emergency Medical Equipment on Passenger Aircraft -**In carrying out an evaluation of emergency medical equipment on airplanes, the FAA must consider whether the equipment meets the emergency medical needs of children and pregnant women.

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