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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** [Neal A. Patel](mailto:neal_patel@heller.senate.gov) | | May 19, 2016 | 202-224-6244 |   **Numerous Heller Priorities Included in Final Passage of Senate THUD/MilCon-VA Bill**  **(Washington, DC)** – Today, U.S. Senator Dean Heller issued the following statement after the United States Senate passed the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (THUD) and the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies (MilCon-VA) Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (H.R. 2577). The legislation included numerous Heller priorities aimed at helping our nation’s veterans and making Nevada’s communities safer. Additionally, the transportation component of the bill is consistent with the [recently-enacted surface transportation authorization bill, the FAST Act](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/12/congress-passes-long-term-highway-bill-including-heller-s-i-11-extension).  “Serving as a member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs, the Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committees, I am committed to addressing the needs of our nation’s veterans, facilitating the safe and efficient transportation of goods and people, and making communities safer across Nevada. This legislation further exemplifies the Republican-led Senate’s determination to accomplish the work of the people. I am proud to see my amendments included in this appropriations bill and recently passed by the Senate. As the appropriations process moves forward, I will continue to ensure Nevadans’ voices are heard loud and clear,” said **Senator Dean Heller**.  **BACKGROUND ON PASSED HELLER AMENDMENTS:**  **Heller Amendment #3948 on VA Disability Claims Reporting**   * **Purpose:** This amendment, cosponsored by Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, enhances the reporting requirements for statistics related to the VA disability claims backlog and statistics so that Congress has a full understanding of the claims being completed by the VA Regional office in each state versus their veteran constituents’ claims being brokered out to a VA Regional Office in another state. * **Background:** The VA has been testing out its new National Work Queue in which claims from other states may be filtered into a different Regional Office to be worked on. As the VA moves to this system, it is important to understand the claims being completed by the specific VARO versus the claims being completed for veterans in that specific state. As a member of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee and as Co-Chair of the Senate VA Backlog Working Group, Senator Heller has been a strong advocate for [improving the claims process](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=1299C421-9AAD-43C2-81E9-B621045D8093), as well as [ensuring that disability claims statistics reported](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=0B244501-CC45-481F-9EE7-300651ACDDD8) to Congress and the public are accurate.   **Heller Amendment #4005 Ensuring Completion of the Rural Veterans Burial Initiative**   * **Purpose:** This amendment requires the VA to complete its Rural Veterans Burial Initiative. * **Background:** In 2012, the VA committed to expanding burial options in rural areas through its Rural Veterans Burial Initiative. This Initiative chose eight rural locations to build a small National Veterans Burial Ground within existing public or private cemeteries. These locations included Fargo, North Dakota; Rhinelander, Wisconsin; Cheyenne, Wyoming; Laurel, Montana; Idaho Falls, Idaho; Cedar City, Utah; Calais, Maine; and Elko, Nevada. However, this Initiative is yet to be fully completed as promised, which is why this amendment would ensure the VA keeps its commitment to carrying out this Initiative. Senator Heller has previously [sent a letter](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=DC38A0B3-4902-41C7-8641-F491F1E841BE) to the VA requesting completion of this important Initiative.   **Heller Amendment #3905** [**Focusing on Community Safety**](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=8D14E683-52D2-4BED-9BBF-68E32490BECE)   * **Purpose:** This amendment ensures that if someone is convicted of aggravated sexual assault, murder, human sex trafficking, or crimes related to child pornography, then that individual will be denied federal housing assistance or have their current benefits terminated.   ###  [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) |