

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:**[Megan Taylor](mailto:Megan_Taylor@heller.senate.gov) |
| May 29, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller Announces He Successfully Worked With DHS to Change Urban Area Security Initiative Formula to Benefit Las Vegas**

*Heller Has Fought for DHS to Consider Visitor and Special Event Data As Part of its Risk Assessment*

**LAS VEGAS**– U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) today announced that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has reconfigured the formula it uses to determine the federal funding that Las Vegas receives from the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program, an issue that Heller has worked on for years to ensure that Las Vegas has adequate resources to protect itself. DHS will now consider visitor and special event data in its risk assessment, specific requests that Heller has made to DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and the Administration.   
  
[In a letter sent to Heller](https://bit.ly/2kCiTtP), Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Brock Long said that the agency has created a new Soft Targets Index as part of its risk assessment. The Soft Targets Index is comprised of two new data elements that Heller has repeatedly urged the agency to take into consideration when determining funding levels: visitor data and events that qualify as Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR)-level. These changes are particularly important given that in 2016, the Las Vegas Valley welcomed nearly 43 million visitors, and every year, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Statistical Area hosts more than 20,000 conventions, of which many qualify as SEAR level.    
  
Heller has repeatedly urged DHS to reconfigure its UASI grant program, which was established to ensure the safety of high-risk urban areas, and to reassess its formula to ensure Las Vegas has the adequate resources to preempt and protect against terror attacks, which have the potential to shatter Southern Nevada’s tourism economy. Most recently, [Heller led a letter sent to DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen that made the case as to why the UASI grant program formula should be reconfigured](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ecf1818a-c538-423d-8e76-4cc334abf71d/03012018%20Delegation%20Letter%20to%20DHS%20on%20UASI%20Formula.pdf).  
  
“This is welcome news for Las Vegas – and the entire state of Nevada – as these two major changes to the UASI risk assessment will go a long way toward ensuring our law enforcement officials have the necessary tools they need to protect against and mitigate threats of terrorism,” **said Heller.** “By incorporating visitor and special events data into the UASI grant formula, the needs of Las Vegas will be better reflected. I’m thankful that after discussions with Secretary Nielsen, President Trump, and requests to the Department of Homeland Security, the Administration has taken significant action to reconfigure this formula. While there is more to be done – including consideration of assets on the Strip – these modifications will help keep the greater Las Vegas community safe and ensure our state’s economy is better protected.”   
  
[Last week, Heller announced that Las Vegas was awarded a $5 million grant](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/5/heller-announces-5-million-uasi-grant-for-las-vegas-to-protect-against-terror-attacks), an increase of $2.13 million from last year, through the UASI program. [Heller has worked extensively to see that Las Vegas has adequate resources from this program to protect itself from attacks,](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=4CBFC0DA-B7E8-48E1-8625-BD83FB2B6C71) and he secured a commitment from DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen that she will work with him on this issue.  
  
Additionally, the president recently signed legislation, which Heller supported, that provides a boost in funding for the UASI  program.   
  
**Heller’s previous work to increase UASI funding for Las Vegas:**

* Senator Heller has repeatedly worked to help deliver UASI funding for Las Vegas, [just last week Heller announced that Las Vegas was awarded $5 million, an increase of $2.13 million from last year, through the UASI program](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/5/heller-announces-5-million-uasi-grant-for-las-vegas-to-protect-against-terror-attacks).
* However, the Senator has been asking DHS to reconfigure its formula to direct more federal funds under the UASI program to Las Vegas as it is a major tourism city, which FEMA doesn’t currently account for in its risk profile formula. Las Vegas saw nearly 43 million visitors last year.
  + Heller wrote a letter to former DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson on the issue [in January 2016](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/espanol/pressreleases?ID=E6CAF0BB-3531-4FFC-92B5-DE28CF428518).
  + In June 2017 [Heller sent a letter to then DHS Secretary John Kelly](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=4CBFC0DA-B7E8-48E1-8625-BD83FB2B6C71).
* Shortly after the Oct. 1 shooting, Heller sent a letter to Acting Secretary Elaine Duke following the Las Vegas tragedy expressing once again his strong concerns with the formula.
* [In March 2018, Heller, Governor Brian Sandoval and the entire Nevada congressional delegation today urged DHS](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2018/3/heller-sandoval-and-nevada-delegation-to-dhs-fix-funding-formula-to-help-las-vegas-prevent-terrorism) to modify its risk formula to better reflect the threats posed to high volume tourist cities like Las Vegas.
* Heller also spoke with the President about how critical the funding is, and the need to change the formula while onboard AF1 when the President visited Las Vegas after the tragedy.

###