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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:**[Megan Taylor](mailto:Megan_Taylor@heller.senate.gov) |
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**Heller Applauds NCAA’s Decision to Allow Championship Events to Occur in Nevada, States with Sports Wagering**

**WASHINGTON** - U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) applauded the decision of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to allow NCAA championship events to occur in states that offer sports wagering and encouraged the NCAA to consider Nevada for future championships. The current decision by the NCAA will give Nevada, [the only state that currently allows sports wagering](https://www.wsj.com/articles/ncaa-will-allow-championships-in-sports-betting-states-1526573806), an opportunity to host an NCAA championship event.

Heller has long [urged the NCAA to revisit its policies](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=69EB71EC-18E3-4FC2-816A-7735FE330F08) that previously prohibited tournament games from being held in Nevada, and today he welcomes their announcement, encourages the change in policy be made permanent, and reaffirms Nevada as an exceptional destination for both tourism and athletic events.

In a letter sent to Mark Emmert, President of the NCAA, Heller wrote, “*Las Vegas and Northern Nevada will draw NCAA fans from across the nation who would welcome the opportunity to experience championships in a brand new arena in a city with other outstanding hospitality assets or the northern part of the state that offers unmatched outdoor recreational opportunities.  I urge you to closely consider the state of Nevada for championship site selection and strongly support making permanent the decision to allow championships in states that offer sports wagering.”*

**The full text of Senator Heller’s letter is available below:**

*Dear President Emmert:*

*I applaud the recent decision by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to allow NCAA championship events to occur in states that offer sports wagering and encourage this change be made permanent. As someone who has long advocated for this change, I believe this is a positive and significant development and encourage your consideration of Las Vegas and Reno as sites for hosting championship games.*

*As you know, Las Vegas and Reno have hosted the PAC-12, Mountain West, West Coast, Western Athletic Conference, and Big Sky basketball championships, as well as bowl games.  Professional sports leagues recently have shown strong support for Las Vegas, which is now home to the 31st National Hockey League team, the Vegas Golden Knights, at T-Mobile Arena. In 2020, Las Vegas will be home to the National Football League’s Raiders.  The city has a brand new, state-of-the-art arena, thousands of hotel rooms within walking distance to the arena, world-class entertainment and dining options, and extensive air travel options via McCarran International Airport.  It is and will continue to be an outstanding venue to host collegiate and professional sports.  Similarly, in Northern Nevada, Reno has experienced significant growth in both residents and tourism, due in part to a downtown revitalization and an evolving culinary scene. Northern Nevada also offers a backdrop of Lake Tahoe, outdoor recreational activities, and other attractions that make Northern Nevada a destination for millions of tourists each year.  By considering Las Vegas or Reno, you can give access to NCAA student-athletes to compete at some of our world-class athletic facilities and bring fans from all around the country to our state.*

*Furthermore, I would like to reiterate my support for making permanent the decision to allow championships in states with sports wagering.  As I’ve said before, there is no question that legal sports wagering, which is dwarfed by the illegal market elsewhere, with appropriate regulations protects the integrity of athletic events.  Legal, regulated sports betting requires an exceptional degree of diligence by both sports book operators and gaming regulators, and this diligence heightens rather than undermines the integrity of athletic events.  The Nevada Gaming Control Board and Gaming Commission work to protect the integrity and stability of betting, and gaming is recognized as one of the most highly regulated and professional industries in our state.  In fact, Nevada’s sports books have been the first to identify point shaving incidences in college sports and have brought such issues to the attention of law enforcement and the NCAA.*

*Las Vegas and Northern Nevada will draw NCAA fans from across the nation who would welcome the opportunity to experience championships in a brand new arena in a city with other outstanding hospitality assets or the northern part of the state that offers unmatched outdoor recreational opportunities.  I urge you to closely consider the state of Nevada for championship site selection and strongly support making permanent the decision to allow championships in states that offer sports wagering.*

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