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**Heller Applauds President for Signing Bill to Help NV Veterans in Reno, Speaks at American Legion Convention**

*President Signs Heller-Backed Bill to Overhaul VA Appeals Process*

**Reno, N.V.** – At the American Legion Convention in Reno today, U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) applauded President Donald Trump for signing a bill to help Nevada veterans and praised bipartisan collaboration to move important veterans’ legislation over the finish line. The President today signed legislation Heller cosponsored and helped pass called the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act. The proposal is a bipartisan overhaul of the VA appeals process designed to increase options for veterans who appeal their cases to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Heller delivered remarks focused on several bipartisan accomplishments to reform the VA, including two bills he helped author that were also signed into law earlier this month: the landmark Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act and the VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017.

“The signing of the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act today is a win for Nevada’s warriors, and all men and women across the country who use the VA system. This new law brings a much-needed overhaul to the appeals process, allowing Nevada’s veterans to receive proper and timely compensation for their war injuries,” **said Heller**. “Those who have made sacrifices on behalf of our nation should not have to jump through hoops when it comes to accessing the benefits that they’ve earned. Over the last few months we’ve been able to make real progress on behalf of the veteran community. That’s due to bipartisan cooperation in Congress and the President’s commitment to support the men and women who have answered our nation’s call.”

[The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=CE669680-D3D4-4395-9DD8-F7143502D0B7) (S.1024), creates three different options for veterans who wish to appeal their case. A veteran would be able to seek a higher-level review by a regional office on the same evidence, file a supplemental claim with a regional office with the ability to submit additional evidence, or appeal directly to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals with the possibility of a hearing or the ability to submit additional evidence. This legislation also institutes safeguards to ensure the VA has a plan to address pending appeals, the authority to test facets of the new appeals system, and compare data between the new and old system to gauge its success in serving veterans and their families.

Heller, along with Chairman of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Johnny Iskason (R-GA) and their colleagues, [worked to improve the House-passed bill](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/8/senate-updates-house-bill-to-strengthen-veterans-rights-in-va-appeals-process) to ensure policies protect veterans in the appeals process were included in the Senate version of the bill.

Heller also spoke about how legislation he championed to expand G.I. Bill benefits will give more Nevada veterans and their dependents the opportunity to pursue an education. The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act was signed into law last week by President Trump.

Additionally, Heller shared in his speech how Nevada veterans will be able to continue accessing life-saving services the VA cannot provide now that the VA Choice Program and Quality Employment Act is law. The proposal also ensures that veterans living in rural communities, like those surrounding Reno and Sparks, are not forced to travel hundreds of miles to reach a VA facility.

“We have the privilege of living in the freest nation on earth because of our veterans,” **Heller said.** “While we can never repay our debt to America’s military heroes, passing critical bills like this into law help demonstrate our sincere respect and gratitude for this exceptional group of individuals. I commend the great work President Trump and Secretary Shulkin are doing to make sure that no Nevada veteran is left behind.”

[As the Co-Chair of the bipartisan Senate VA Backlog Working Group](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=2daa6da5-8c7a-447d-951a-c03e9f1f11e9), Heller has long advocated for solutions to expedite the processing of veterans’ disability claims and appeals and ultimately reduce the VA’s backlog, which still hovers around 82,000 backlogged disability claims and 470,000 appeals.

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