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**Heller Applauds President’s Push to Expand Access to High-Speed Internet in Rural Communities**

*Executive Action In Line with Heller Bill to Streamline Approval Process for Constructing Rural Broadband Infrastructure*

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV), a member of the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, applauded President Trump’s executive order aimed at expanding broadband access in rural communities in Nevada and around the country. The President’s executive action is in line with [legislation](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/6/heller-manchin-introduce-bill-to-expand-access-to-rural-broadband) Heller introduced along with Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV) to streamline the application process required to construct broadband infrastructure on federal lands.

The President’s executive order directs federal agencies to remove obstacles to broadband deployment and reduce barriers to investment in broadband infrastructure. Specifically, the executive order directs agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of the application process to build out broadband infrastructure on federal property and ultimately streamline and expedite the review of these requests.

“As a strong advocate of ensuring Nevada’s rural communities have access to high-speed Internet, I am encouraged by the President’s executive action aimed at increasing access to broadband and improving connectivity in rural areas,” **said Heller.** “Expanding broadband in Nevada presents unique challenges, particularly because nearly 85 percent of Nevada is owned by the federal government. That is why I welcome the President’s push to cut Washington red tape that serves as a significant barrier to broadband buildout and rural connectivity and why I introduced legislation to do exactly that. In order to compete in today’s global economy, our rural areas need quality, high-speed Internet access, so I will continue to work with the White House, the Administration, and my colleagues to promote policies that will improve broadband accessibility throughout the state.”

Since coming to the Congress, Heller has advocated for policies that encourage rural broadband investment. In June 2017, Heller introduced [bipartisan legislation that would expand rural Americans’ access to broadband](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/6/heller-manchin-introduce-bill-to-expand-access-to-rural-broadband) by streamlining the inefficient and inconsistent application process required to construct broadband infrastructure on federal lands. Specifically, the legislation implements a 270-day clock for the Department of Interior (DOI) and US Forest Service (USFS) to respond to applications. If the federal agencies miss the deadline, the application is deemed approved and if the application is denied, the agency must notify the applicant of the reason for denial. It also requires the federal agencies to establish regulations within one year that reflect a streamlined, consistent, and standardized process for application review. Lastly, it requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to examine the accuracy of and improvements to the National Broadband Map to examine whether this data is accurate and how it is relied upon to award grants for broadband expansion in rural areas. The bill has been referred to the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

**Background:**

* Heller fought for the following provisions to be included in the MOBILE NOW Act (S.19), which currently awaits consideration by the full Senate, to address issues with access to quality broadband:
	+ **Heller Amendment to Impose a 270-day Shot Clock on Application Decisions:** One of the greatest inhibitors to broadband infrastructure expansion is the time it takes for federal agencies, particularly those that manage federal lands, to act on applications for easements or rights-of-way for constructing or modifying broadband infrastructure on federal property. This provision implements a 270-day shot clock for agencies to respond to applications for these specific easements or rights-of-way.
	+ **Heller Amendment to Streamline Broadband Facility Location Applications on Federal Lands**: This provision requires the National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) to develop recommendations, in coordination with federal agencies that manage federal lands, to streamline the broadband facility location application process. NTIA must also follow up with these agencies regarding what actions have been taken in relation to these recommendations.
* On May 3, 2017, Senator Heller [questioned panelists](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/5/icymi-heller-federal-agencies-are-holding-up-broadband-infrastructure) at a Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hearing regarding delays in broadband expansion on federal lands and its impact on Nevada companies that are trying to build out Internet access to rural areas.
* On February 2, 2017, [Heller joined his colleagues in calling on the FCC](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/d2236120-4abf-4a77-87bf-599acaf9b9ca/02022017%20Cosign%20Letter%20to%20FCC%20Chairman%20Pai%20on%20Mobility%20Fund%20Phase%20II.pdf) to expand access to mobile broadband services in rural America and to make closing the digital divide a top priority for the Commission.
* On January 31, 2017, [Heller joined his colleagues in asking President Trump](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/3e6b13fe-e014-46d6-9c5c-15c3fe34cae0/01312017%20Cosign%20Letter%20to%20President%20Trump%20re%20Broadband%20in%20Infrastructure%20Package.pdf) to include investment in deploying high-speed broadband to all Americans as a part of any infrastructure package that could be considered by Congress.
* On May 24, 2016, [Heller wrote to the FCC](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/40329a18-44a1-414f-9059-c44d0e0d2531/05242016%20Heller%20Letter%20to%20FCC%20re%20Connect%20America%20Fund%20II.pdf), requesting that any funds directed toward broadband deployment in rural and high-cost areas are technology neutral to ensure that parts of the country with challenging terrain like Nevada can use technology that is cost-effective and feasible for delivering broadband to that area.
* In February of 2016, Heller [questioned panelists](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/videos?ID=29B14E4A-0E8D-423B-B89F-7C227577274D) at a Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hearing regarding current FCC programs, such as the Connect America Fund and the Mobility Fund, and how these programs are being used by the Federal Communications Commission to bring rural communities greater Internet access.
* In July of 2015, Heller [spoke](http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/7/heller-highlights-importance-of-expanding-internet-in-rural-nevada) at a Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hearing addressing the future of wireless broadband and spectrum policy in rural towns. During the hearing, he spoke about the importance of bringing more spectrum to the market and highlighted how to deploy faster Internet service to rural areas across Nevada.

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