

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** Megan Taylor |
| January 9, 2018 | 202-224-6244 |

**Heller Backs President’s Fight to Streamline Veterans’ Access to Mental Health Services**

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV), a senior member of the U.S. Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, today lauded President Donald Trump’s executive order to assist veterans in Nevada and across the country in accessing mental health care and resources.

Specifically, the executive order directs the secretaries of the Departments of Defense (DOD), Homeland Security (DHS), and Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a plan within 60 days that provides streamlined access to mental health treatment and suicide prevention resources for recently-separated service members and to update the President on the implementation of the plan and outline further reforms within 180 days.

“We are grateful and forever indebted to our veterans and that’s why we must never forget what they have done to protect this country and our freedoms. I applaud the President for taking action today to help ensure that those who have bravely worn the uniform can access the care they need for their invisible wounds,” **said Heller.** “This executive order is especially important for my home state of Nevada, which has the third-highest veteran suicide rate in the country. As a strong supporter and author of legislation to assist our nation’s heroes, each day I wake up thinking about what I can do to help Nevada’s 300,000 veterans. I strongly believe that no veteran should be forced to fight through long waits for an appointment or red tape when seeking mental health services and it’s why I will continue to work with my colleagues on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee and in the Administration to hold the VA accountable.”

A senior member of the U.S. Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, Heller has been a long-time champion of efforts to address veterans’ [mental health services](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2014/11/heller-demands-improvement-of-backlog-to-address-poor-mental-health-of-veterans), [including recruitment of medical professionals in rural areas](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=F65727FA-396E-45FE-8368-736A23289DCA), and help curb the veteran suicide rate. In 2015, he cosponsored the Clay Hunt SAV Act, bipartisan legislation signed into law aimed at reducing and preventing veteran suicides.

Additionally, Heller cosponsored the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2017 (S.1015), a bill to study and improve the national suicide hotline.

Last summer, [Heller hosted VA Secretary David Shulkin in Reno, Nevada](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=E5B0E4D8-6124-47F1-AC54-DD1D0DF301B5), where they discussed this issue and toured the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System. Heller signed a declaration reaffirming his commitment to preventing suicide among Nevada veterans.

*###*