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**Heller Continues Fight Against VA Claims Backlog, Hold Federal Agencies Accountable**

*The Government Accountability Office today released report on veterans’ disability claims as direct result of Heller’s legislation*

**WASHINGTON –**As a direct result of legislation authored by U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV), the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has today released a [report](https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-15)to summarize findings on the process used to review veteran disability claims. [Heller’s legislation, the 21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=0fc103f4-e52c-4c2b-833b-f1eee7cace02), became law in 2016 as part of sweeping legislation to address a larger scope of issues facing our nation’s veterans and is designed to reform the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability claims process and effectively reduce its backlog. Since Heller began fighting to reduce the VA’s backlog, the claims backlog has been reduced by over 85% between 2013 and today.

Specifically, Heller’s 21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act address three segments of the claims process that are in need of improvement: submitting claims, the practices of VA regional offices, and the overall response from government agencies. By taking into account these critical aspects of the claims process, Heller’s legislation ultimately aims to better educate veterans on the process used to submit claims, increase accuracy and efficiency at regional VA offices across the country, and hold federal agencies accountable in prioritizing the VA claims process. Furthermore, the GAO’s report offers critical recommendations for the VA to adopt, including how to address errors in claims, developing better performance measures, evaluating communication with veteran service organizations, and implementing an initiative to obtain feedback from Congressional caseworkers on communication with regional offices.

“Our nation’s heroes should not have to wait longer than 125 days to receive responses to their disability claims, which is why I worked across the aisle to navigate the bipartisan 21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act into law,” **said Heller**. “Our legislation not only addresses three essential aspects of the claims process, but has allowed detailed reports and recommendations to be published as a direct result. I am pleased to see that the report released today by the Government Accountability Office includes five recommendations to accelerate the response and accuracy of regional offices as they work to process veterans’ claims. As a senior member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, I look forward to continuing to develop legislation that supports the men and women who have sacrificed so much in defense of our freedoms.”

As Co-Chair of the bipartisan [VA Backlog Working Group](https://www.heller.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=2daa6da5-8c7a-447d-951a-c03e9f1f11e9), Heller has long championed efforts to better understand the VA claims process and develop commonsense solutions that aim to completely eradicate the claims backlog. Furthermore, since serving in the U.S. Senate, Heller has authored, helped introduce, and navigated into law 45 pieces of legislation specifically designed to support Nevada’s 300,000 veterans.

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