

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – February 20, 2004

A Great Start to Restoring the Green-Duwamish Watershed

On Thursday, I teamed up with Ron Sims and community leaders in Tukwila to kick-off efforts to restore the Green/Duwamish River Ecosystem. This watershed has been damaged over the past 100 years – affecting plant and animal life and the cities throughout the basin.

Over the past 9 years, leaders have worked together to plan restoration activities that will improve the water supply, recreation, and salmon recovery.

This year, Rep. Dicks and I secured \$500,000 to begin work on two sites this summer (one at North Wind's Weir on the Lower Duwamish and another at Meridian Valley Creek in Kent). They are the first of 40 sites targeted for restoration. King County and the cities in the basin have shown a strong desire to restore the watershed, and I'm proud to support their efforts.

Helping the Uninsured

On Friday, I met with patients, advocates and doctors in Shelton to discuss healthcare access in Grays Harbor, Mason, Thurston, Pacific and Lewis counties. Those areas are served by the CHOICE Regional Health Network, a nonprofit consortium.

I am fighting to keep this innovative, collaborative healthcare solution alive. The President has once again proposed a dramatic cut to the Community Access Program (CAP). CAP funds the CHOICE network and three other health care networks throughout our state.

Last year, I took on the White House and helped save the CAP program. And again this year, I will stand up for everyone in our state who is having trouble getting access to healthcare.

Supporting Tribal Education, Understanding & Technology

On Friday, I helped dedicate a new feature at the Squaxin Tribe's museum and learning center in Shelton. Standing with tribal leaders, educators and children, we dedicated a new media wall that will help museum visitors understand the tribe's history and will give tribal members access to new educational opportunities.

The high tech media wall will be used to videoconference classes and seminars from the Northwest Indian College in Bellingham. I provided \$180,000 so the tribe can use this new technology to preserve its past and improve its future.

For more information on the museum, see <http://www.squaxinland.org>

Improving Healthcare in WA

On Friday, I spoke to 200 hospital administrators and clinic managers in Tacoma about solutions to our state's health care crisis.

The meeting took place at Tacoma General Hospital and included leaders from the MultiCare Health System, which operates 3 hospitals and more than 40 clinics throughout the Puget Sound. I also toured the neonatal unit at Mary Bridge Children's Hospital.

Improving Traffic in Bellevue

Like many areas, downtown Bellevue is facing transportation problems that will only get worse as the local population grows. On Thursday, I met with Bellevue mayor Connie Marshall and Overlake Hospital officials to hear the latest ideas for improving access to downtown Bellevue and to the Overlake Hospital area.

The hospital has ambitious plans to expand its campus, and local leaders want to ensure that transportation infrastructure will be able to accommodate the hospital's expansion.

Last year, I secured \$1 million to help the city find the best ways to improve the flow of traffic and improve emergency and public access to the hospital.

Empowering Latino Students

Tonight I was honored to join with educators, elected leaders, and more than 150 students in Olympia for a conference hosted by the Latino Educational Achievement Project (LEAP). LEAP was instrumental in passing the In-State Tuition bill last year.

In our state, the number of Latino students is growing dramatically. Over the last 15 years, the Latino population has grown by nearly 200%. It is expected to double over the next 20 years.

The numbers are growing, but our support for Latino students is not. Sadly, Latino students still score last, or near last, on our state's assessment tests. Students who don't speak English face even more barriers and are falling even further behind.

While the national high school graduation rate is 70 percent, it is only 52 percent for Latino students. We cannot sit by as nearly half of our children drop out of school and are denied their full potential.

Unfortunately, the President's budget fails to make the investments we need to make. For example, the President's budget eliminates Even Start, a literacy program for low-income families.

The President's budget also freezes funding for bilingual education and only provides a minimal increase for programs like GEAR UP, which are targeted to at-risk students. We can do better, and in the Senate I'm proud to support the things that will help all of our children reach their full potential.

To see how the President's budget affects the Latino community, please see: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=218132>

For more information on Latino issues, please see my website:

English: <http://murray.senate.gov/hispanic>

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