

# **PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW**

**U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – April 2, 2004**

## **Murray to Hold Hearing For VA Hospital**

Washington's veterans have a lot at stake as the veteran's administration in Washington D.C. decides the future of health care. I want to make sure that Washington's 700,000 veterans have a voice. That's why I'm bringing a Senate veteran's affairs committee field hearing to Washington state next month.

On April 12<sup>th</sup> I will convene the hearing in Walla Walla at the Walla Walla Community College Conference Center.

Last year the Administration appointed a commission to ensure that we meet the current and future healthcare needs of American's veterans.

The commission recommended closing VA Medical Centers in Tacoma, Vancouver and Walla Walla, despite the growing needs in those communities. They have since reversed their plans for Tacoma and Vancouver. But Walla Walla still remains on the chopping block. The effect of the inpatient closure could be devastating for the 12,000 patients that the hospital serves.

It is important to note that a Senate Field Hearing is not a town hall. Rather it is a formal opportunity to collect testimony from a handful of veteran's service organizations and providers but I want to make sure that all veterans have an opportunity to share their concerns with me about the CARES process.

That is why I've created a special **form** on my website where you can share your view directly with me.

## **Unemployed Workers Get Cut Off Unemployment Insurance**

Wednesday was a very bad day for unemployed workers in our state. That was the last day that any federal unemployment benefits were paid to our unemployed workers.

My report <http://murray.senate.gov/labor/wa-state-unemployment.pdf> on unemployment, which I released with Senator Maria Cantwell, illustrates how critical unemployment insurance is to Washington families.

I am asking for a six month extension on federal unemployment insurance and for 13 weeks additional benefits for jobless workers to help provide a relief to these families.

In Washington state over 20,000 workers have exhausted their unemployment benefits and an expected 25,000 more will lose their benefits within the next three months. These are 45,000 families that aren't able to make the house payment or put food on their table.

Unemployment just doesn't affect individual families, it affects communities. The extension of federal unemployment insurance would provide \$320 million in economic stimulus to Washington state.

## **Senator Murray Announces New Flights from Seattle/Tacoma**

I am happy to announce that travelers from Washington state to our nation's capital now have more options when traveling to the East Coast.

The Department of Transportation has awarded Alaska Airlines additional daily nonstop roundtrip flights slots between Seattle/Tacoma and Washington D.C. In my meeting with Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta last month I asked him to consider Alaska for these slots.

Washington state and other West Coast air passengers can now fly to and from the nation's capital without having to transfer through the Midwest where congestion and bad weather often cause troublesome delays.

## **New Child Care Funding For Washington Children**

This week I voted for an amendment that will increase funding for families who cannot afford child care. The amendment will mean nearly \$140 million in increased child care funding for Washington families. The Snowe/Dodd Amendment passed overwhelmingly in the Senate.

I've fought for child care funding in the past and I will continue to fight for it in the future. I know that quality child care produces children who have greater math, thinking and attention skills opposed to children who receive poor childcare.

The need for child care is increasing because of our high unemployment rate and because of the increased work requirements. Many out-of-work parents are looking for jobs, and they need child care to be able to look for a job.

In 2001, 51,200 children receiving subsidized child care. This amendment will help those families get on their feet while providing a safe and productive place for their children.

## **No Relief for Hispanic Unemployment**

The nation's Hispanic unemployment rate remained stagnant at 7.4% for the month of March according to figures released today from the U.S. Department of Labor. Hispanic unemployment still remains well above the national unemployment of 5.7%.

National unemployment increased during the month of March, up to 5.7% from the February figure of 5.6%, with long term unemployment increased by 117,000. Under the Bush Administration, approximately 2.6 million private sector jobs have been lost, with this March's job creation totaling only 308,000 new jobs.

The Bush Administration has repeatedly failed to extend unemployment benefits for the millions of unemployed Americans, placing them in greater jeopardy of not recovering from a recession. Budget cuts to retraining programs and community colleges, which provide a second choice for out of work Americans, has proven especially damaging to the Hispanic community.

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