

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – November 10, 2005

Honoring our Veterans

VETERANS' DAY - Tomorrow, we will honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans. But Veterans Day is not just a ceremonial holiday. It's also a time to ask if we have done enough for those who served our country. Today, I spoke on the Senate floor and held a press conference on the importance of providing for their needs.

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=248574>

In my remarks, I highlighted four areas we must address:

1. Keep The Level Of Funding The Senate Provided For Vets' Healthcare This Summer - I was pleased to be joined yesterday by six major veterans' organizations in emphasizing the importance of fully funding veteran's healthcare needs.

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=248537>

2. Help Veterans With PTSD, Don't Investigate Them - Today, we learned that the VA has agreed with my request to not scrutinize or stigmatize veterans suffering from PTSD. The VA has canceled its planned review of 72,000 PTSD claims. I hope this encourages vets to seek the help they need.

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=246352>

3. Fix The Budget Process - The Bush Administration needs to send us a realistic budget for next year. No gimmicks. No games. Just real numbers based on the real needs. And the VA needs to give us a clear picture of how it's spending the money we've provided, and what our veterans will need in the coming months.

4. Help Our Guard And Reserve Members - Finally, we need to help our Guard and Reserve members. We're relying on them as never before, but our support services don't reflect that. We need to update our transition & employment services to reflect how much we're asking of our Guard and Reserve.

Guard and Reserve Will Get Bonuses

BIG VICTORY FOR GUARD AND RESERVE - This week, the Department of Defense agreed to my request to pay the re-enlistment bonuses it promised to more than 300 Active Guard and Reserve members, including about 25-30 in Washington state. After months of exchanging letters with DoD, and even introducing an amendment, we've finally succeeded.

In January 2005, the National Guard Bureau began offering re-enlistment bonuses to Active Guard and Reserve members in combat zones who extended their service commitment. But, in April, the Pentagon reversed course and notified those who had signed up that it would not pay the bonuses it had promised.

I became aware of the reversal and began writing to Pentagon officials saying that our country must honor the promises we make to those who serve us. Finally on November 7, I received a letter from DoD telling me that they had decided to do the right thing and pay the promised bonuses.

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=248408>

Keep the Ballard Locks Open

This week, I announced that the final House-Senate Energy and Water spending bill includes \$2.1 million I secured to keep the Ballard Locks operating without reductions in services.

The Ballard Locks play a critical role in supporting our economy and our quality of life, and I'm pleased to announce that there will be no need for cutbacks this year. It was an uphill battle because of the tight federal budget, the President's proposed cuts, and the lack of House funding, but we prevailed. This is great news for the region's workers, businesses and families.

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=248409>

Funding WA Priorities

On Tuesday, I announced that, as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I secured millions to support salmon recovery, local environmental initiatives, and criminal justice projects in Washington state. The funding is provided in a House-Senate conference report on the 2006 Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill. I secured funding for the following projects:

- **Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund** - \$67.5 million
- **Northwest Straits Commission** - \$1.4 million
- **Methamphetamine Program** for WA - \$2 million
- **Muckleshoot Indian Tribe** - Gang Intervention - \$250,000
- **Pacific Northwest Regional Collaboratory** - \$4 million
- **Lower Elwha River Habitat Restoration** - \$280,000
- **North Pacific Fixed Gear Research** - \$150,000

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=248469>

BETTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE FOR SNOHOMISH CO. - I also announced, along with Congressman Rick Larsen (WA-02), and Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon, that the House-Senate Conference Report on CJS funding will include \$1.5 million for the Snohomish County Emergency Radio System (SERS). This funding will greatly improve Snohomish Co. emergency response.

NEAR THE FINISH LINE - The conference report is in its final version, and will now go to the full Senate and full House for approval. It will then be given to the president to be signed into law. I'm proud to help meet our state's needs in these critical areas - especially in as tight a budget year as this is.

Improving Columbia River Navigation

FUNDING DREDGING AND JETTY REPAIR - The Columbia River is a critical economic engine for Southwest Washington. This week, I announced that I've secured \$32 million to help improve navigation and economic growth on the Columbia. On Monday, a joint House-Senate conference committee approved the Energy and Water Appropriations bill for 2006. In the bill, I secured \$15 million for the Columbia River Channel Improvement Project and \$17 million to repair the jetties at the river's mouth.

CRITICAL FUNDING FOR PORTS OF CHINOOK, ILWACO - I also succeeded in securing a total of \$1.2 million - \$600,000 each - for dredging at the Port of Chinook and the Port of Ilwaco. Neither the president's budget nor the House of Representatives included funding for these projects. I'm proud to support our shallow-water ports.

Don't Cut Hanford Cleanup Funding

Hanford area residents and workers deserve a strong federal commitment to nuclear waste cleanup. Two weeks ago, I was deeply concerned to learn that - largely due to a lack of advocacy by the Department of Energy - \$100 million in critical funding could be stripped from the nuclear waste cleanup at Hanford. Specifically, this money would be taken from the construction of the vitrification plant that would clean up the most dangerous waste at Hanford.

This week, I expressed my disappointment with the administration on this vital public health issue. The White House and Energy Department say they support this project, but the Vit Plant was the only Energy Department project targeted for cuts in the president's supplemental two weeks ago. Actions speak louder than words. It is now up to the Administration to show it will honor its commitment by supporting funding that will get the project back on track.

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=248422>

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