

# PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – January 27, 2006

## First Newsletter of 2006

I'm proud to send you my first weekly update of 2006. You're receiving this update because you signed up on my Web site in the past year. I look forward to keeping you updated throughout the year on issues of importance to Washington state and the Pacific Northwest.

### No on Alito

This week I announced that I will vote against the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to fill Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's seat on the Supreme Court.

I recognize the significance of a seat on the United States Supreme Court. The Constitution directs Senators to provide advice and consent on all judicial nominees, and the people of Washington state have trusted me to be their advocate and to safeguard their rights as I vote on judicial nominees. I take that responsibility very seriously. That's why I've reviewed Judge Alito's past writings, studied his answers to the Senate Judiciary Committee, and asked to meet with him in my office.

As I have set out in the past, my standards are: Is the nominee qualified, ethical and honest? Will the nominee be fair, evenhanded and independent? And will the nominee uphold the rights and liberties of all Americans?

I am comfortable that Judge Alito is qualified, honest and ethical. Whether he will be fair and evenhanded is another question. As was discussed at his hearing, he has a troubling record of voting for the government and corporations and against individuals. He seems to favor the entrenched power over the little guy. His record does not give me the confidence that everyone who comes before the Court will be treated fairly.

I am also deeply concerned about Judge Alito's independence. We rely on our courts to be a critical check and balance against government abuse. That independent check helps to protect our rights. This is especially important today because of the growing questions about the expansion of executive power. The Supreme Court will need to evaluate whether recent executive actions are constitutional. Here, Judge Alito's unbalanced, minority view of the scope of executive power tells me he does not have the independence to be an adequate check on government abuse of our rights.

Finally, I have serious doubts that Judge Alito will uphold our rights and liberties. One example is his hostility to the right to privacy. In the hearings, he refused to say that *Roe v. Wade* is "settled law," and he did not adequately explain his 1985 statement that the "Constitution does not protect a right to an abortion."

The next justice will have the power to change the Court, change the country, and change our rights for generations. Judge Alito has a very troubling record. In his hearing and in our private meeting, he did not show he will be an independent judge who will uphold the rights and liberties of all Americans. With our rights and freedoms on the line, I will not take a chance on Judge Alito because I have serious questions about his independence and commitment to protecting our rights and liberties.

*For more on the Alito vote:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=250775>

## Protecting our Borders and our Economy

At a Senate hearing on Wednesday, I urged the Bush Administration to delay the passport requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) until 2008. WHTI will require people crossing the border into the U.S. to show a passport or other approved document starting on December 31, 2006 for passengers entering our country by air or sea and by December 31, 2007 for land border crossings.

I am deeply concerned that these new rules could hurt Washington state commerce without actually improving security. Our state has a robust tourism industry that has historically depended on fluid cross-border travel. There is evidence that the passport requirement is already impacting cross-border tourism simply because the rules and implementation dates have not been clear to the average citizen.

That is why, as a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, I urged James Williamson, Director of the U.S. Visitor and Immigration Status Indicator Technology Program to consider delaying the implementation of these requirements. I also called on the Administration to work more closely with our local communities to address their concerns – possibly even establishing an official advisory group made up of effected business and community leaders.

Also this week, I joined with all members of our state's Congressional delegation in sending a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff expressing concerns about the travel initiatives.

*For more on the travel initiative and letter:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=250773>

## Standing up for our Aerospace Workers

On Monday, I was pleased to address the first meeting of the Aerospace Futures Alliance of Washington. The newly-formed Alliance is a group of legislators, policy makers and business and industry professionals whose goal it is to come together and speak with one voice on issues affecting the aerospace industry.

Aerospace manufacturers and airline companies employ more than 100,000 people in Washington state, and we need to fight to make sure we have local and national policies that support the industry and our workers. I look forward to working with leaders from across our state to put the needs of American aerospace workers back on the radar in Washington, D.C.

## Go Hawks!

In anticipation of a big win at Super Bowl XL, Senator Cantwell and I placed a friendly wager on the game with Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) – a big Steelers fan. Senator Cantwell and I are offering up some of Washington state's finest – smoked salmon, apples and coffee. Senator Santorum is wagering some of his home state goods – pierogies and hot wings. Senator Cantwell and I are looking forward to a meal of Pittsburgh treats on Feb 6th. The Steelers have had a great season, but what they don't have is the 12th man. And it's that great Washington state spirit that will be with the Seahawks as they win big on Super Bowl Sunday.

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