

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington May 2, 2003

WELCOMING HOME THE U.S.S. LINCOLN

This week the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln returned to the U.S. and on Tuesday the crew will return home to Everett. To honor the crew's dedication and courage, Senator Cantwell and I introduced a resolution in the U.S. Senate on Thursday, commending them for their service to our country.

I look forward to visiting the Lincoln on Tuesday to join with the families and friends of these brave men and women in welcoming them back home to Everett. All of us in Washington state and across the country owe them a debt of gratitude for their service and heroism over the past ten months.

Last night, from the deck of the Lincoln, President Bush declared that combat operations in Iraq have ended. Like all Americans, I am proud of the courage and dedication of our men and women in uniform.

We must remain committed to fighting and winning the war on terrorism. Our actions in this post-war period will have a significant impact on our future peace and security. I will continue to support our troops in their efforts to promote democracy and restore order to Iraq.

COAST GUARD MUST RETURN TO TRADITIONAL MISSIONS

Those of us in Washington state know that the Coast Guard is absolutely critical to our safety and livelihood. We never cease to be impressed by the accomplishments of our men and women in the Coast Guard, and we are proud of their role in Operation Iraqi Freedom. We salute the efforts of the Port Security Unit from Tacoma which was instrumental in restoring order after Coalition Forces took Umm Qasr.

But since the Coast Guard has had to take on important new Homeland Security missions since September 11th, hours spent doing its traditional missions have been reduced.

The first Coast Guard Quarterly Operations report, released to Congress on April 15th, confirms a significant decline in traditional Coast Guard missions like drug interdiction, marine safety and fisheries enforcement.

In September, when Congress drafted the Homeland Security Act, which transferred jurisdiction over the Coast Guard from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security, I raised concerns about the impact this move would have on traditional Coast Guard missions. That is

why I included language in the 2003 Appropriations bill requiring that the Coast Guard submit quarterly reports on its overall missions to help us understand the toll being taken by new homeland security missions on more traditional operations.

As the Coast Guard executes its port security mission, we still depend on the agency to keep drugs and illegal migrants off our shores, to protect our environment, and the integrity of our fishing grounds. The majority of Americans live in coastal states, or along the Great Lakes or inland waterways. And every American is impacted when the Coast Guard slows down its work in areas like stopping illegal drugs.

I am proud of the accomplishments of our Coast Guard, and I will continue to work to provide the federal support they need to carry out both their core missions and their new mission.

NEW AND IMPROVED WEBSITE

On Wednesday, I launched my new website by hosting an online videoconference with students from around the state. The new site is designed to make it easier for you to learn more about me, and the work I am doing for our state in the U.S. Senate. I took recommendations from more than 2,000 visitors to my old website and used their suggestions to build a new and improved website.

The site is also among the most advanced and most comprehensive in the U.S. Senate, with major improvements in the areas of content, accessibility, navigation and usability, and includes 29 issue pages on topics like asbestos, homeland security, transportation and telehealth.

My site features a new color-coded, interactive map of Washington. It is easy to use and will show you what I'm doing to help your community.

You can also watch video clips of my speeches on the Senate floor, learn how to apply for federal grants, and check out a new Spanish section.

I was proud to launch the new website by hosting an online videoconference with students from across our state. Technology is strongly tied to the future of our economy and it is incredibly important for our students to have the skills and resources necessary to be competitive in tomorrow's job market. Learning how to use the internet and computers is an important part of this process.

I hope that you enjoy my new website as much as I do and use it to keep in touch with me, and my office. I will continue to update the site so that you can hear about what is happening in Washington, D.C. to help our communities in Washington state.

Please visit my upgraded site at: <http://murray.senate.gov>

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