

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – January 5, 2007

A NEW CONGRESS: New Priorities to Support American Families

Priorities of Washington State to Benefit from New Leadership Role

On Thursday, recently elected and re-elected members of the U.S. Senate took the oath of office, and the balance of power swung back to the Democrats. I am confident that this will be an important step forward for many struggling American families who will benefit from the new majority's legislative priorities. Those priorities include:

- Raising the minimum wage,
- Cutting the cost of student loans,
- Implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations,
- Fixing the Medicare prescription drug benefit, and
- Restoring the American people's confidence in government through ethics reform.

These and other positive steps forward cannot be accomplished without working with Republicans. As a member of the leadership, I will be working hard to end the partisan squabbling that has been the hallmark of Washington D.C. politics for far too long.

The start of the new Congressional session also means that I will begin my new role as Democratic Conference Secretary. This new position, the fourth-ranking spot in the Senate leadership, means that the needs and priorities of Washington state will have a greater voice in Congress. In the upcoming Congress, I plan to address several critical issues within our state including:

- Passing the Wild Sky Wilderness Bill which will establish over 106,000 acres of wilderness in our state,
- Passing workforce training laws that meet the needs of our state,
- Keeping our promise to Washington state veterans by fighting for full funding of their care and benefits, and
- Funding my port security law so that our state's communities and economic interests are protected.

I look forward to a productive 110th Congress in which the real needs of the American people are addressed. It is time to get to work on solving problems in a way that moves this country forward and gives promise and hope to the next generation.

To view a speech I delivered this week on the Democratic Majority's priorities please visit:
[rtsp://video.webcastcenter.com/srs_g2/Murray010407a.rm](http://video.webcastcenter.com/srs_g2/Murray010407a.rm)

SALES TAX: Making Deduction Permanent for WA State Residents

On Thursday, I joined Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) in sponsoring a bill to make the sales tax deduction a permanent part of the U.S. tax code. Making the deduction permanent will help Washington state residents by eliminating the need for last-minute extensions, like the one I recently fought to pass in the U.S. Senate. Making the deduction permanent will eliminate the doubt about whether Washington state residents can realize significant tax savings in a given year.

The sales tax deduction helps middle class families pay for school, cars and other major expenses. Last year alone, Washington state taxpayers saved \$500 million from the state sales tax deduction. By making the sales tax deduction permanent we will establish long term fairness in our state's tax system and put money back into the pockets of our state's taxpayers.

**Please Visit <http://murray.senate.gov> to get the form you need to calculate your sales tax deduction for this year.

PRESIDENT GERALD FORD: A Man Who Brought Healing at a Difficult Time

Our nation lost a great man last week with the passing of President Gerald Ford. He served our country with honor, and his contributions to the world will always be remembered. President Ford understood that despite our strife and differences our country worked best as a united force, and he worked to heal our national wounds by bringing America together. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends during this difficult time.

Working to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies

This week I joined Senator Reid (D-NV) and Senator Clinton (D-NY) in reintroducing the Prevention First Act. The Prevention First Act is a common sense, common ground step toward improving access to women's health care and reducing the staggering number of unintended pregnancies and resulting abortions.

The Prevention First Act would:

- Increase funding for the National Family Planning Program,
- Expand Medicaid family planning services,
- End insurance discrimination against women,
- Improve awareness about emergency contraception,
- Provide compassionate assistance for rape victims,
- Work towards reducing teen pregnancy, and
- Ensure that federally funded programs provide medically accurate information.

I am proud to work for better access to safe and affordable family planning options. Expanding access to health care services and education programs is an important step in reducing unintended pregnancies and improving health care for women across America.

HELPING WORKING FAMILIES

This week I signed on to two critical bills that will help low-wage worker's in Washington state and across the country.

Increasing the Minimum Wage – This week I supported a bill that will raise the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour. Over the last 10 years, despite the efforts of many Democrats in Congress, the federal minimum wage has not seen any increase. During that period, the cost of living in America has skyrocketed. This legislation will correct this unfair and unacceptable imbalance. It will directly benefit nearly 13 million American workers who are struggling to get by.

Giving Workers the Right to Paid Sick Days

This week I also supported a bill that will guarantee working Americans are given seven paid sick days to care for their own and their families' medical needs. This bill is critical to our nation's public health and the well being of many American families.

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