

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – September 17, 2007

Investing in Washington State: A Major Victory for our Transportation, Housing and Community Development Needs

On Thursday, I led the Senate in passing critical spending legislation that makes a major investment in Washington state transportation, housing, and community development projects. As Chairman of the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations Subcommittee, I worked hard to craft this legislation that invests in both critical national priorities and the needs of our communities.

[Details](#)

To get information on Washington state projects included in this bill, click on any of the regions below:

[King County](#)
[Bellingham/NW](#)
[SW Washington](#)
[Kitsap](#)
[Olympic Peninsula](#)

[Snohomish County](#)
[Spokane/Eastern WA](#)
[Olympia](#)
[Tacoma](#)

[Tribes](#)
[North Central WA](#)
[Grays Harbor](#)
[Tri-Cities](#)

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Bridges: A \$1 Billion Investment in Our Country's Failing Bridges

The Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development bill that passed Thursday also included an amendment that I introduced which adds \$1 billion to fund the replacement and rehabilitation of structurally deficient bridges across the country. The funding includes nearly \$35 million for bridges in our state. Even before the tragic Minnesota bridge collapse in August, I have been working to address the needs of our nation's aging infrastructure.

[Details](#) | [Watch a speech](#) I delivered on my amendment to fund the repair of our nation's bridges.

["Senate OKs \\$1B to Repair US Bridges" - AP](#)

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Iraq: Reaction to Testimony from Petraeus and Crocker

On Monday and Tuesday I listened to the testimony of General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker. Their testimony, like much of what I have heard and seen before, makes it clear that despite the stellar efforts of our troops, this conflict simply cannot be solved militarily. I still firmly believe that we must begin to redeploy our troops from Iraq and chart a new direction that allows us to rebuild our military and refocus on stopping the spread of terrorism around the world.

[Details](#)

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Defense: Investing in Washington State Companies that Protect our Service Members

On Wednesday, I announced that I included \$50 million in federal defense work for Washington state companies in the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Appropriations bill. This funding will help our state's companies continue to provide our service members with the best equipment available. It will also create family wage jobs for residents throughout our state.

[Details](#)

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Veterans: Calling for Honesty and Leadership after Report Reveals VA Misrepresented Patient Wait Times

On Wednesday, I spoke out on the Senate floor after the Department of Veterans' Affairs' (VA) Inspector General's office released a report that revealed the VA has manipulated statistics on VA patient wait times for health care appointments. The report showed that significant numbers of VA patients were waiting longer than 30 days for appointments, and that those patients' wait times were not being accurately reported. I had previously been assured by the VA Secretary and other VA officials that upwards of 95 percent of VA patients were being seen within 30 days.

[Details](#) | [Watch my speech](#) on the Senate floor

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Labor: Protecting Workers and Honest Employers

On Thursday, I joined with colleagues to introduce legislation that will protect workers and taxpayers against the practice of misclassifying employees. The misclassification of workers, often as "independent contractors", costs taxpayers billions and denies thousands of American workers protections such as workers compensation and overtime pay. The legislation I helped introduce will restore benefits to workers and level the playing field for honest employers who follow the rules and are hurt by the higher payroll taxes.

[Details](#)

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AROUND OUR STATE:

Spreading the News about Landmark College Affordability Legislation

The University of Washington

On Thursday, I visited the campus of the University of Washington to celebrate the Senate's passage of higher education legislation that will provide more federal support for Washington state students. The support will come in the form of increased Pell Grants, a significant reduction in student loan interest rates, a cap on monthly loan payments, and various specialized grant programs. The students I met were excited and encouraged by this important legislation that will help them and their families afford college.

["Murray urges Bush to sign college aid bill"](#) – Seattle PI

Sound Transit Debuts Reverse Commute Train to Tacoma

King Street Station – Seattle

On Thursday, I helped Sound Transit launch their newest rail line aimed at meeting the needs of commuters in the Puget Sound region when I helped christen the first reverse commute train to Tacoma. Tacoma is currently undergoing a major revitalization in its downtown area and more commuters need a fast and reliable way to get back and forth to work each day. The reverse commute train will serve Seattle and suburban workers.