

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington February 14, 2003

WE NEED MORE THAN JUST DUCT TAPE

Recently, the federal government raised the terror warning level in the United States from "elevated" to "high." This means that the Administration has a reasonable concern about another attack on our country. Despite this very serious warning, our police, firefighters, health care workers and other first responders still do not have all the resources they need to do their jobs. Instead, Americans are being told to buy duct tape and canned goods to prepare ourselves for the worst.

Two weeks ago, I met with local officials in Mason County. Fire Chief Richard Knight told me that he desperately needs new equipment and new communications tools to help coordinate the fire department's response with police and other emergency personnel. I have also talked with frustrated constituents who have spent hours at the Canadian border trying to get back through Customs.

Some of these problems could have been solved last year when Congress sent President Bush a \$2.5 billion emergency appropriation for homeland security. Unfortunately, the President rejected this funding to assist our borders, ports and communities with critical security needs. And this year, the new majority dramatically reduced funding for homeland security that could have protected American citizens.

Like nearly every other state, Washington state is facing major budget shortfalls. In response, our legislature is making some painful cuts. Our states cannot be asked to foot the bill for homeland security costs.

Homeland security is a national issue and one that requires shared sacrifice. The federal government has a responsibility to provide the resources to make sure all of our citizens have the protection they need.

I hope that the President and his allies will rethink their opposition to homeland security funding. I hope they will listen to people like Chief Knight and join us in providing communities the resources needed to protect all of our families.

KEEPING FERRIES AFFORDABLE

I am pleased to announce that Washington state international ferry passengers will not have to pay a new three-dollar fee which was scheduled to take effect later this month. Working with Senator Cantwell and Congressman Dicks, we successfully added language into the 2003 Congressional Spending bill to exempt ferry passengers from the fee on international ship passengers.

International ferry travel is a very important part of our economy and transportation system in the Pacific Northwest. A three-dollar fee would significantly impact the pocketbooks of Washington residents who depend on our ferries for their transportation needs. I will continue to work to keep passenger ferries affordable and accessible.

CRITICAL STATE FUNDING

I am proud to announce that communities across our state came up big this week with hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding for Washington state priorities in the final House-Senate Appropriations bill. The conference report is the final step in the year-long appropriations process.

In the face of significant cuts, I am pleased to have maintained critical funding for our state's healthcare, education and environmental needs, including **\$120 million** in funding I restored for the Community Access Program across the country. CAP provides health care to thousands of uninsured and under-insured across the country and has four grantees in Washington state alone. This is great news for working, uninsured families who are struggling with their health care.

I am particularly proud to have provided **\$210 million** for specific transportation priorities across our state. I know this increased federal support will make a real difference for families and communities in our region and will help keep jobs and businesses in Washington state.

For Puget Sound funding see:

<http://www.murray.senate.gov/~murray/releases/03/02/2003214740.html>

For Eastern Washington funding see:

<http://murray.senate.gov/~murray/releases/03/02/2003214656.html>

For Southwest Washington funding see:

<http://murray.senate.gov/~murray/releases/03/02/2003214753.html>

For Central Washington funding see:

<http://murray.senate.gov/~murray/releases/03/02/2003214715.html>

For Northwest Washington funding see:

<http://murray.senate.gov/~murray/releases/03/02/2003214707.html>

A NEW POSITION IN THE SENATE

I am happy to announce that I have a new position in the Senate that will give me added opportunity to advocate for Washington's working families. As the highest Ranking Democrat on the Employment, Safety and Training Subcommittee I will be able to bring a strong Washington state perspective to employment issues in the U.S. Senate. Worker safety, unemployment assistance and retraining are critical to the continued strength and security of our nation. I look forward to using my new position to continue to advocate for working families on issues of safety, job security, equal pay and worker rights.

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