

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – March 19, 2004

Making Our Ports Safer

On Monday, March 15, I joined with port, security, and trade leaders at the Port of Tacoma to celebrate the arrival of the first container shipment tracked by Operation Safe Commerce (OSC) – the initiative I created to increase security at our nation's ports and to facilitate safe shipping for U.S. industry and consumers.

There are tremendous challenges facing everyone involved in the global supply chain. OSC provides a new way to track cargo from its point of origin overseas to the point of distribution here in the U.S. OSC creates an electronic shield around the cargo containers that enter our ports every day. It bolsters our security, and it improves the supply chain that American families and businesses rely on. Simply put, we're creating a better way to protect our ports, our communities and our economy.

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=219197>

Trade Adjustment Assistance In Yakima

Last week I announced that I had secured Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) for laid-off Boeing Commercial Airplane Group and Triumph Group employees in Spokane. As the highest-ranking Democrat on the Senate Employment, Safety and Training Subcommittee, I am proud to announce that TAA is now available to laid-off employees of the softwood division of Yakima Resources, L.L.C., formerly Boise Cascade Corporation.

These workers can now get:

- Federal income support (weekly cash payments available for 52 weeks after a worker's state unemployment compensation is exhausted);
- Training assistance (up to 104 weeks of approved training in occupational skills, basic or remedial education, or literacy training);
- A job search allowance (reimbursements for approved expenses if workers are successful in obtaining employment outside the normal commuting area).

Last year, the U.S. Department of Labor rejected a petition by laid-off Yakima workers for TAA assistance. But I continued to work with the Western Council of Industrial Workers - Local 2739, the Washington State Labor Council, and the U.S. Department of Labor, and got the relief that these hardworking people need – and deserve.

Meeting with – and Listening to – Washingtonians

This week, while the Senate was in recess, I attended events all over our great state. I had the opportunity to meet with hundreds of Washingtonians, answer their questions, and listen to their concerns at the following events:

Cascade Land Conservancy Breakfast

On Monday, I delivered the keynote address to 300 environmentalists, elected officials, and community leaders at the "Get Wild" 3rd Snohomish County Conservation Celebration. It was a great event – and a great opportunity for me to voice my continuing support for preservation of Washington's majestic open spaces.

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=219212>

Veterans' Events

I also had the opportunity to meet with veterans in Tacoma on Monday and in Vancouver on Tuesday. Recently, I saved the American Lake VA from the CARES chopping block, and I am now working on doing the same for the Vancouver VA medical center. As the daughter of a World War II veteran, I have always been a strong supporter of veterans and their families. I was glad to be able to give these brave Americans an update on my efforts to fight against proposed cuts to VA services.

Vancouver Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber's monthly luncheon was an excellent opportunity for me to hear about issues affecting Chamber members and Vancouver area residents so that I can continue to fight for those priorities when I'm back in Washington, D.C. In my keynote address, I spoke about the economic and transportation challenges facing southwest Washington.

Transportation in Washington is one of my top priorities, because I know that transportation means jobs. A good example is the Bay Bridge Fabricators deal that I helped secure, which could bring hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in family-wage employment to the Vancouver area.

Oregon Iron Works Visit

While in Vancouver, I visited the Oregon Iron Works facility and met with the company's workers and management. I was excited to see with my own eyes several of the projects I've helped fund in the Senate, like the 85-foot Guardian Marine Patrol boats and the second Oregon Iron Works SEALION craft. I'm proud to have directed over \$26 million in U.S. Navy and Coast Guard projects in the past three years to highly skilled boat builders and steel workers in southwest Washington.

Everett Public Schools Foundation Breakfast

On Wednesday, I delivered the keynote address at the Foundation's 10th annual breakfast benefit. In my address, I assured the audience, which included more than 300 teachers and community members, that I am fighting hard in the Senate to see that all of Washington's children get the quality education they deserve.

Last week, I proposed an amendment to the FY 2005 Republican budget plan that would force the federal government to keep its promise to fully fund the No Child Left Behind Act. I've also been working for some time on the Pathways for All Students to Succeed (PASS) Act, which would improve our nation's high schools by raising graduation rates and making them better able to prepare students for college, jobs, and training.

Medicare Prescription Drug Forums with Seniors

At the Olympia Senior Center on Monday, and at the Stillaguamish Senior Center in Arlington on Wednesday, I continued my ongoing series of discussions with Washington's seniors about the Medicare Prescription Drug bill Congress passed last year. I think it's crucial that seniors understand how the new Medicare prescription drug plan will affect their lives.

If you're interested in learning more about this issue and how you can get involved in reforming the bill, please visit my Web site at <http://murray.senate.gov/rx/rx-update.cfm>.

For more information on the Olympia event, please visit <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=219216>.