

# PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – October 14, 2005

## Fighting for Our Veterans

This week, I held roundtable discussions with veterans in Kent and in Vancouver to discuss two of the most pressing challenges they face upon completing their service.

**KENT: ENSURING VETS GET HELP WITH PTSD** - On Tuesday, in Kent, I hosted a roundtable discussion with recently returned veterans, mental health providers, and advocates to discuss the signs and treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It has been estimated that as many as 40 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans may experience symptoms of PTSD. I also held this event so I could update veterans about some recent work I've been doing to help deal with PTSD. *Details:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=246352>

**VANCOUVER: ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETS** - On Thursday, in Vancouver, I held a roundtable with veterans, advocates, and labor and business leaders to hear concerns and help our veterans address the economic and employment challenges they face when they return home from the battlefield.

The return of so many Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans has made veterans' employment assistance crucial. I've met with many veterans - especially Guard and Reserve members - and so many of them have told me they've had difficulty accessing employment assistance once they are demobilized. They tell me stories about struggling to get caught up at work after deployment, difficulty accessing education benefits, or struggling to find a job so they can support their families.

I'm using these discussions as a forum to hear from our veterans and to help come up with strategies to meet the economic challenges they face. *Details:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=247068>

*Sign up to get periodic updates on my work for veterans:*  
<http://murray.senate.gov/vetupdates>

## Investing in our Waterways

On Thursday, I spoke to the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association in Vancouver about the need to invest in our region's infrastructure. Efficient roads and waterways mean jobs for Washington families. While the budget is tight in Washington, D.C., I believe we need to make smart investments, such as repairing the jetties at the mouth of the Columbia River, lifting restrictions on the public hopper dredges that keep our channels clear, and maintaining Washington's smaller ports.

## Keeping Kittitas County Strong

**ROSLYN: CITY HALL AND LIBRARY RENOVATION** - On Monday, I visited Roslyn to announce that I had secured \$300,000 to renovate and restore the Old City Hall and Library building. The building, listed in the National Register of Historic places, has served as a recreational space for coal miners and their families, a social hall, and the seat of local government. The renovation of this building will bring expanded services and programming to all members of the community, and help lay the foundation for Roslyn's future economic growth.

**ELLENSBURG: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROUNDTABLE** - On Tuesday, I participated in an economic development roundtable discussion at Central Washington University. One the things I admire about Kittitas County is how it continues to grow yet maintains the same quality of

life its residents cherish. The state transportation package, which passed earlier this year, will provide \$387.7 million in funding to make necessary improvements to I-90. I know our farmers face difficult times, which is why I've fought to restore the Hatch Act, obtain critical resources, and secure \$18 million in federal funding for agriculture research in our state.

## Preparing for High-Tech Careers

I've been deeply concerned that American schools are not keeping up with other countries in math and science. On Thursday, I visited nLight's Vancouver headquarters to see firsthand the kind of public-private partnership that's helping to address that problem so that our state and nation remain economically competitive in the future. The Mentoring Advanced Placement Programs AP Physics (MAPP) program is helping prepare children for advanced-placement physics so they can go on to jobs in high-tech industries.

I'm so proud of nLight and their partners on this project - the Workforce Development Council and ESD #112. They're helping lead to way to a strong future, and I'm going to continue to support their work.

## Supporting Healthcare IT

I've been a strong supporter of using the latest technology to reduce medical errors and improve patient care. On Tuesday, in Seattle, I attended a demonstration of technology that will allow us to expand access to specialty care, coordinate care and improve disease management, reduce medical errors and improve quality, measure outcomes to enhance performance, and guarantee access to the most cutting-edge treatments available.

Thanks to an innovative partnership between Microsoft and Group Health, we're using information technology to make huge strides in our efforts reduce medical errors and improve patient care. And - perhaps most importantly - we're going to allow patients to have ownership over their medical records - and their health.

## The New Medicare Drug Law

**MEDICARE ROUNDTABLES** - Over the past week I hosted roundtable discussions throughout our state. In Yakima, Olympia, Aberdeen, Tacoma and Seattle I heard concerns about how the new Medicare drug law will impact Washington's most vulnerable residents. At each of these roundtables, I listened to doctors, patients and advocates who will be affected by the new plan.

Unfortunately, the Medicare drug law threatens those who need the most help - low-income residents, the disabled, and senior citizens. In Washington state, 118,000 of these residents are "dual eligibles" - their incomes are so low they qualify for assistance from both the federal Medicare and the state Medicaid programs. The new law pushes vulnerable citizens into complicated plans that cost more and provide less, resulting in patients not getting the drugs they need.

**MY BILL WOULD HELP** - In order to address these problems, last week I introduced S. 1822, the Medicare HEALS Act. My bill would allow states to use Medicaid to help reduce co-pays and premiums for our most vulnerable. It would also give patients a full year to choose a plan. My bill is an important first step in fixing the most urgent problems with the Medicare drug benefit.

*Details:* <http://murray.senate.gov/medicare/medicare-heals.pdf?id=245283>

## Take Action on FDA Handling of Plan B

To sign a petition urging FDA to take action on over-the-counter approval of the safe, effective Plan B emergency contraceptive:

<http://clinton.senate.gov/contact/petitions/planb.cfm>

To subscribe, unsubscribe, or change your email address, visit: <http://murray.senate.gov/updates>