

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington –September 29, 2006

Interrogation Bill Undermines America's Values and Puts American Troops at Risk

On Thursday I voted against the "Military Commissions Act of 2006" which was backed by President Bush and the Republican led Senate. The legislation ultimately passed the Senate by a vote of 65-34. The measure gives President Bush unprecedented ability to determine interrogation techniques. I voted against the measure because it is unbalanced and politically-motivated. I also believe that it puts our troops at risk, rejects our country's values, and alienates the allies we need to win the War on Terror. In addition, this measure could potentially prove unconstitutional.

The United States is not alone in trying to rid the world of terrorist threats. But, unfortunately, the Bush Administration is acting that way. I'm very concerned that by turning away from the Geneva Conventions we will weaken the support we need from nations around the world to fight terrorism.

I also worry that this bill threatens the safety of our own troops should they fall into enemy hands. The standards of torture in this bill defy the Supreme Court's ruling and the Geneva Conventions. This deeply-flawed approach could further endanger American troops and weaken our standing in the world.

Defeating terrorism, protecting our citizens and upholding our American values should not be partisan issues. The most basic questions of security and democracy should not be placed in the context of trying to influence the outcome of an election.

I take a backseat to no one when it comes to protecting our nation, and I know our security should be both tough and smart and should not come at the expense of the ideals of democracy upon which this nation was built. We can do better than the bill that was passed on Thursday.

Mapping the Brain: Applauding a Revolutionary Tool

Web-based "Allen Brain Atlas" Will Support Brain Research around the World

On Tuesday I spoke at the unveiling of the Allen Brain Atlas, an innovative new tool to advance brain research. The Atlas, supported by philanthropist and Washington state resident Paul Allen, is an online database of brain images that scientists and researchers will use to understand brain disorders and ultimately save and improve lives. The database will be available for all researchers at no cost.

The Atlas Project represents a giant leap forward in medical innovation. By providing a comprehensive map that links all of the major structures of the brain with genetic data, the Atlas will have a profound affect on the understanding of neurological diseases from Alzheimer's, to Autism, to Epilepsy, to Parkinson's.

The program was launched by a \$100 million donation from Mr. Allen. Using this seed money, a distinguished group of researchers compiled over 600 terabytes of data, including

85 million images of the mouse brain, which will help scientists understand the human brain.

I also hope that this research can aid scientists and medical professionals in their efforts to treat many of our veterans who are coming home with brain injuries. I have long been an advocate for increased medical and scientific research and I applaud this wonderful effort.

Elimination of Military Jobs: Demanding Answers on Plan to Cut Fairchild Jobs

On Monday I joined my Washington state colleague Senator Maria Cantwell to call on Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to provide immediate answers to reports that Fairchild Air Force Base will lose as many as 260 jobs. The possible cuts which were reported by Spokane media outlets last week are part of anticipated force restructuring throughout the Air Force. However, the lack of details provided by the Defense Department as well as the Pentagon's failure to notify the Fairchild community and the Washington Congressional delegation presents a serious problem.

Fairchild Air Force Base is not only a critical national military asset, but also an important part of the Spokane community. The men and women of Fairchild and their families are a positive presence in our economy, our schools, and the livelihood of our entire region. Just as they work to protect us everyday, we, too, need to ensure the protection of our workforce at Fairchild—and the best way to do that is to involve them, our communities and members of Congress in the decision-making process.

In our letter Senator Cantwell and I criticized the lack of details available about the Fairchild personnel reductions and asked for clarification of the military's plans. Specifically, we asked for the number of positions slated for elimination and if there would be any additional cuts in the future. We also requested details on the Defense Department's policy for providing public and Congressional notification in advance of reductions like those at Fairchild.

OTHER NEWS:

Demanding Better Oversight of the VA

On Wednesday I spoke on the Senate floor about the need for increased oversight for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). I shared with other members of the Senate several disappointing reasons why we need to take a closer look at this Administration approach to caring for our nation's veterans.

To read my speech visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=263906>

Calling for an Extension of the Sales Tax Deduction

On Wednesday I was joined by Senator Maria Cantwell and Congressman Brian Baird at a press conference to call for an immediate extension of the sales tax deduction and other vital tax cuts for working Washingtonians. Together, we urged Congress to pass these measures in order to give Washingtonians the tax fairness they deserve.

To read more visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=263889>

Republicans Fail to Act on Appropriations Bills

On Friday I spoke on the Senate floor about how the Republicans failure to act on annual funding bills will hurt our communities.

To read my speech visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=264141>

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