

# **PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW**

**U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – November 7, 2003**

## **\$750,000 FOR STRAW-TO-ENERGY PROJECT**

I am proud to announce that I have secured \$750,000 for an innovative project in Spokane County that turns farm waste into electricity. The Straw to Energy Project will utilize new technologies to convert waste, excess grass or wheat straw into energy.

Washington grass seed producers are not allowed to burn straw residue in their fields after harvest due to clean air regulations. But, the presence of this excess straw makes it difficult for new plants to grow. New technologies developed at the NW National Laboratories and by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research service and by private parties have shown promise in converting excess straw into gas which can fuel a diesel generator or be converted to ethanol.

This technology has the potential to provide long-lasting economic benefits for Eastern Washington. Eventually, our farmers could get paid for their farm waste, and our region could have a renewable energy source.

## **GREAT NEWS FOR CLARKSTON CENTER**

The residents of Clarkston and the surrounding area have worked hard to make the Clarkston Lewis and Clark Bicentennial a success for both visitors and for the region's economy. That is why I am pleased to announce that I have secured both the needed Congressional authorization and a half-million dollars in federal funding for the Clarkston Confluence Center in the Energy and Water Appropriations conference report.

The Confluence Interpretive Center will be located at the meeting of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers and will house a permanent Lewis and Clark exhibit as well as traveling exhibits and displays on regional culture and history.

Clarkston has a rich story to tell, and I am pleased that it will be heard by visitors from across the country.

## **PROTECTING MECHANICS FROM ASBESTOS**

On Tuesday I sent a letter to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Acting Administrator urging her to reject a shady effort to stop the EPA from warning brake mechanics about the dangers of cancer-causing asbestos in brakes.

Brake mechanics handle this potentially-deadly material every day. They deserve to know the dangers so they can protect themselves from asbestos exposure.

An investigation of brake shops in six states and the District of Columbia found that two-thirds of the 31 brake shops tested showed "dangerously high levels of asbestos." Despite these disturbingly high statistics, the international law firm of

Morgan, Lewis & Bockius has petitioned the EPA to stop distributing warning booklets, posters and videotapes that give mechanics information on how and why they should protect themselves.

Since EPA takes responsible measures to warn homeowners about hazardous asbestos insulation, it must also warn brake mechanics and others who could be exposed to such a deadly substance. I will continue to press EPA to do the right thing and protect our citizens from the dangers of asbestos.

## **SENATE APPROVES AGRICULTURE FUNDING**

On Thursday the Senate passed its annual Agriculture spending bill. I was proud to secure nearly \$4.7 million for Washington state agriculture priorities in the bill. This federal funding will support ongoing research for a broad range of agriculture sectors in the Northwest, including wheat, potatoes, barley, shellfish, wine grapes, organic foods, hops and small fruits. The bill must now go to a House-Senate conference committee to reconcile differences with the House-passed spending bill.

Increased funding for these research programs will lead to better products and to bigger markets for Washington agricultural products. We must do all we can to support industries which will provide jobs and economic growth to our rural communities.

The following projects are funded in the Senate bill:

- \$150,000 to protect and enhance Washington's wine industry
- \$126,000 to strengthen organic crops research at WSU
- \$250,000 for hops genetic research
- \$250,000 for the Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research
- \$3.908 million to restore the President's cuts to the Ag Research Service Program cuts from President's

## **TANKERS HEADED TO AIR FORCE, WASHINGTON STATE**

After nearly two years of work, I am proud to announce that we now have a plan to speed the delivery of 100 Boeing air refueling tankers to the men and women of America's Air Force. I've met with some of the courageous men and women who fly with the 92<sup>nd</sup> Air Refueling Wing based at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane. I promised them the best equipment available, and we are about to start delivering on that promise.

Thanks to the hard work of my Washington state colleagues Sen. Cantwell, Rep. Norm Dicks and Rep. Rick Larsen, along with many others in both the House and Senate, the Pentagon this week agreed to a compromise on the lease of the Boeing 767s. The compromise allows the Air Force to lease 20 tankers and provides a formula to purchase an additional 80 aircraft at a steady rate of 11 to 13 per year until the final plane is delivered in fiscal year 2014.

These planes are the backbone of our military's global reach, and they will be built right here in Washington state. This means jobs for our workers and a shot in the arm for our state's economy. So, I'm proud to tell the workers at Boeing's 767 Everett plant to crank up the line - because we're sending a 100 plane order your way!

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